WHERE SAINTS HAVE TROD

M.D.PETRE

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WHERE SAINTS HAVE TROD

Where Saints have Trod

Some Studies in Asceticism

By M. D. PETRE

With a Preface by the
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PREFACE

THERE is always a grave danger to the interests of religion in the fact that those who are impressed with the obvious need of embracing much that is new in form and those who are equally impressed with the duty of standing by what is old in substance, are apt to look upon these aims as incompatible and therefore to be intolerant of one another.

Within certain limits the antagonism of these parties is healthy, in that it secures a due attention to both of those conditions of true progress which rarely dominate equally in any one mind. But beyond such limits there is a distinct danger lest either interest, by hampering or destroying the other, should also destroy the condition of its own sane development. Self-criticism and self-restraint rarely obtain except where there are others ready to criticise and restrain us should we fail of our own duty. The advocates of the Past and those of the Future are indeed animated as a rule by very different spirits—as different as age is from youth, as analytical reason is from intuition, as prudence is from enthusiasm. Yet each has its own blindness, each wants the guidance of the other; neither can say: "I have no need of thee." If in these days it is necessary to remind the more conservative school, whose trust is in outward protection

rather than in inward strength, that life means assimilation, growth, self-adaptiveness to an ever-varying environment, it is perhaps still more necessary to remind the pioneers of progress that true development means continuity with antiquity; that that is but a fungoid and no legitimate outgrowth whose root-fibres cannot be traced back till their subdivisions are lost in the illimitable past; that what springs up quickly will as quickly wither away just because it has not much root in the life of generations gone by.

For unquestionably the not infrequent tactics of the traditionalists—apathetic, dilatory, suspicious of enthusiasm—are bound to exasperate those the vividness of whose conceptions and the generosity of whose impulses is inverse to their power of quiet calculation, and to make them narrowly intolerant of aught that is soiled with the dust and mould of antiquity, be it never so precious. That the past would grip them too tightly is made a reason for shaking themselves wholly free of its lawful grasp, and for rejecting without discrimination claims that have often been urged without discretion. By such ruffled and irritated spirits the plea which this volume offers in favour of the well-trodden ways of the Saints—of the ethical and ascetical principles of the Past—may be received with a certain degree of impatience. The sense of the radical revolution that has taken place in ways of thinking and living may make all efforts at adaptation and re-interpretation seem to them unreal and sophistical. A wholly new world, they think, calls for wholly new methods.

Such a view has had no mean exponents of late years; but though plausible, and, in the

light of the provocations referred to, somewhat excusable, it is nevertheless, we venture to think, fundamentally fallacious.

Doubtless the word "Asceticism" has in common usage come to stand for the abuse or perversion of that which it originally signified—for a sort of wanton hostility to the reasonable claims of our nature, which could only be justified on the principles of a pessimism diametrically opposed to Christian Faith and Hope. From this misapprehension it has been the easier to pass to a somewhat sweeping condemnation of the Church's ascetical tradition because of certain tares that have grown up with, or have been over-sown among, the wheat of reasonable doctrine—certain relics or importations from those older oriental religions of despair which it was the destiny of Christianity to displace, yet not so instantly or absolutely as forthwith to obliterate every trace and fibre of the ingrained convictions and sentiments of whole races and ages. Moreover, as it stands, the ascetical tradition of Catholics consists of the amassed and recorded spiritual experiences of fathers of the Church, hermits of the desert, doctors, mystics and saints, not to speak of their multitudinous commentators, compilers, retailers and exponents. It represents all centuries, all countries, all varieties of age, sex, culture and condition; it is uttered in many tongues and in the forms and figures of many different philosophies. Were we to amass the empirical and pre-scientific medical lore of the world into one great tradition we should have something analogous in point of chaotic unwieldiness. Unlike theology, asceticism has but rarely threatened

to divide the Church or called for œcumenical definitions which could be built up into an organic body of doctrine—an ascetical *Credo*.

Some efforts of these later centuries to reduce this unsorted mass of material to a more or less scholastic form, so as to supplement the lead of inward experience by *a priori* deductions of the Divine Will have not been at all as successful as they were well-intentioned; and in spite of them it still remains true that, for almost any question that can be raised, one can get as many different answers as there are different authorities. It is as with proverbs of which one can be adduced for or against every line of conduct. And yet for all this seeming conflict the proverbs of a people embody its practical experience and are pervaded by the unity of a spirit which is justified in them all. Similarly, could we assign each maxim and apophthegm of the heaped-up *débris* or conglomerate of ascetical tradition to the precise date, place and circumstances of its origin, we should probably see it was as true for those conditions as its opposite was for other conditions; that it is only when taken as true simultaneously, always and everywhere, that they are irreconcilable; that, spaced out systematically in the order of their genesis, they would exhibit a fairly rational and progressive series of manifestations of one and the same spirit—a process of continual selection and refinement, whereby men's first rude conceptions of holiness are shaped by the Divinity that is in them, through the instinct and sentiment of charity, to a more adequate vehicle and expression of Itself.

When we remember that Christianity is

before all else a Way and a Life, that the mystical communion of the soul with God is the very end to which the Church's dogmatic and sacramental system, her hierarchy, her discipline, her ritual, are all directed, it would be indeed strange if the progressive guidance of the Spirit, which is claimed for these latter, were denied to the former. "Is not the body more than meat, and the life more than raiment?" It is, however, just because the Church's ascetic life has been so much more natural and spontaneous, so much less formulated and systematized; it is just because, being the work and interest of all and not of a class, it has been so luxuriant, widely diffused and manifold, that it evades our reflex observation and criticism, and comes to be regarded as a subordinate or side issue which can be left to take care of itself—forgotten, as the end so often is in the interest of the means. Nowhere has the Spirit worked more peaceably, naturally and persistently; nowhere have men's ideas been selected, shaped, refined and put together more purely under the influence of that inward charity whose fluctuations of quality and intensity, whose waxings and wanings have been the "Urim and Thummim," the Divine index, of the greater or lesser truth of their conceptions.

It is perhaps through attending more to the symbols and figures than to the inward life of which they are the expression, that we fail to discern any sort of unity and system in the various expositions of the doctrine of the spiritual life; and because they have found utterance in terms of childish exegesis, or of popular superstition, or of unscientific psychology, we turn from them impatiently, not reflecting that, for example, a

spiritual phenomenon which is ascribed to the intervention of good and bad angels, or to a disturbance of the bodily humours and vital spirits, may nevertheless be very accurately recorded in such terminology, and may be of universal interest, not only for the religious, but for every other department of human life. And similarly those spiritual remedies which antiquity found efficacious by experience were none the less so because their *modus operandi* was so little understood, or because what belonged to the whole class was often considered peculiar to the individual case, and what was really so peculiar was as often ascribed to the whole class.

Again, the instinct that prompts an action may be right, and the reasons alleged in its justification either wrong or inadequate. The prohibitions and prescriptions of the religious spirit, like those of the moral sense of mankind, are not to be lightly set aside because the defences elaborated for them by analytical reason may have proved valueless. Many points of sexual morality, for example, have been till recently justified by philosophers on grounds that have been cut away by a better understanding of physiology and other matters; yet their authority does not derive from such after-reasons nor perish with their failure. They are dictated by the instincts of our whole Christian civilization, and embody the accumulated experiences, the unconscious reasonings of centuries of development, and to tamper with them is to play with unknown forces of world-wide destruction. And so with the laws of the spiritual life, the gathered experiences of the Saints, the uniformities of the order of grace, we may

not discount such a *consensus* because the reasons assigned for it by doctors and scribes are invalid, unless it can be shown that the *consensus* was created by such reasonings.

Many and diverse as are those constructions of the spiritual world, with its furniture, its denizens, its events, its laws, which have been fabricated by ascetics and mystics, yet all alike are utterances of the same Pilgrim's Progress, or Divina Commedia, or Ghostly Combat. In ourselves we contain the key to them all, and in the measure that we lead the life, we shall understand the doctrine and discern the spirits whether they be of God. For the spirit of Christ is one, and the soul of man is one—most of all, in those secret depths where it is rooted in God. Profoundly as Christianity has been destined to influence the intellectual, social and political life of the world, yet its immediate and proper work, through which it flows out beneficently in these directions, is a work of internal deliverance and redemption, whereby man is restored to himself and to the feet of Christ, clothed and in his right mind, no longer the prey of a legion of conflicting errors and passions, but with all the wild forces of his nature united, harmonized, and brought under his full and free control; no longer passively determined by his impulses, as a leaf driven by the wind, or a straw borne on a stream, but actively self-determining in the light of those ideals which Christ has embodied for his guidance. For the wages of sin is the death of the will, the gradual contraction and final extinction of the power of self-determination, the slavery of one who has so lost all spiritual virility that he can no longer count

on his will or predict what he may do or not do in those very matters which rest with his will alone. And by a natural penalty the range of such matters grow daily restricted according as habit and automatism encroach upon the region of freedom and self-determination, even as the sea eats up the land; and so there is "taken from him that which he seemeth to have," and the spirit is brought into complete bondage to the mechanism of nature.

"But the gift of God is eternal life"—the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and restored to us our dominion over ourselves. For divine grace is not to be conceived as merely weakening the attraction of sin or as opposing to it a counter-attraction under whose influence we should be as passive as a balance that sways according as it is weighted on this side or that; nor yet as taking away those difficulties and temptations, in the overcoming of which our will is braced and developed; nor as fencing and sheltering us outwardly from spiritual storms and tempests. It does not change the environment of our will but the will itself, however unable we may be to reconcile this truth with that of our freedom; it does not coddle and enervate, but strengthens us to face the storms, to conquer the temptations, to oppose active resistance to passive attractions, to extend the realm of self-determination further and further at the expense of the realm of mechanism and passivity. This is the deliverance that grace effects not only in, but with and through, the will of man. Unlike the shrinking asceticism of despair, the virile asceticism of the Christian bids him die, not for death's sake, but only that he may live. It sends

him forth in the steps of his crucified Master, suffering indeed and to suffer, yet conquering and to conquer.

The conception of the deliverance of man from the kingdom of Satan and of his subjection to the kingdom of God has been cast in a thousand shapes, and the history of the process, as repeated with personal variations in each several soul, has been told in a thousand tongues, yet the idea is substantially one and the same: the Spirit that strives with man's spirit works ever towards the same end according to the same law and methods—works not only in the units but progressively in the whole body of the faithful, enriching each generation with the gathered experiences of those that have gone before. We may not despise the heritage of the past, to which we are indebted unawares for so many of our most familiar ethical and religious assumptions, for our noblest ideal of character. Under other names the principles of asceticism, mortification, poverty, chastity, obedience and the like play their part to-day in the healthy development of personality of will and character as much as they did in the middle ages. It is not now less necessary than it always was, to check the bias of egoism by a counter bias so as to arrive at the mean. What is this but mortification? Nor is it less necessary to our spiritual independence and self-government to exercise a certain parsimony in the matter of acquisitions and superfluities, a certain temperate frugality in eating and drinking, a rigid austerity as to those sensual impulses whose indulgence so quickly induces the most abject slavery of soul. Never did men need more of that self-abnegation and charity

which subjects the interests of each member to that of the whole social organism. And what does all this mean but a still clearer conception and firmer practical apprehension of the principles of poverty, chastity and obedience?

To bring out the eternal and universal values of the ascetical teachings of bygone ages; to seize the essential identity of the spiritual combat under all diversities of expression, and, by showing its bearing on actual life, to lend meaning and interest to a language that has in some sense been outlived, and now falls mostly as a wearisome repetition on listless ears, must be the aim both of the preacher and spiritual guide if the treasury of the past is to be made available for the use of the future. Such is the purport of this volume. Of the two schools, the conservative and the progressive, that perhaps which emphasizes the claims of the old suffers more injustice than the other at the hands of ignorant and indiscreet champions, who at times make even its best friends pause and wonder whether a cause that is furthered by methods so disingenuous, violent and uncharitable, can really have anything to say for itself. So much the more should a book like the present be welcomed by both sides; for it is only by mutual understanding and respect that they can ever hope to co-operate profitably to the advance of the Christian and Catholic religion.

G. TYRRELL.

Feast of the Holy Name, 1903.

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Where Saints have Trod

PROLOGUE

"SON of man, thinkest thou these bones shall live? Lord God, Thou knowest!" In each successive age men find themselves standing on a field covered with the bones of those institutions and habits and opinions that have gone before, and again and again, on every fresh occasion, the old controversy arises as to what is to be done with the aforesaid bones. Some say that dead bones are only fit for a dust heap, and thither should they be promptly carted. Others maintain, on the contrary, that, whether dead or alive, the bones were there first, and have a right of prescription, to which all more recent rights should be sacrificed. But the prophet stands apart, and asks himself, in that voice which sounds through him, but is not altogether of him, the one question which is of any importance in the matter—"Shall these bones live again?" Are they dead beyond the power of recall? or is life still stirring amongst them? Are they hopelessly separate and utterly isolated? or do they still retain their adaptability to their common organism and a latent principle of unification? And, while the two opposite sides

noisily maintain their opinion, the one to bury the bones, the other to leave them where they are, he speaks the word that is given him to speak, and the life in the bones answers to the life which is in him; they obey his creative power, and, rising up, they take their rank among the living, not by right of prescription, but of new birth in flesh and blood. The world is theirs because they still are of it; they claim the privilege not to cumber the earth but to cultivate it. But without the voice that roused them they must have remained for ever in their sleep; the past cannot speak except through the mouth of the present.

Old intellectual systems cannot be treated like old ruins, and allowed to occupy the ground simply in virtue of their artistic beauty. Even ruins, however exquisite, are liable to demolition when they come into actual antagonism with living interests, just as the glories of the virgin forest must make way for the habitations of man. But intellectual and spiritual ruins become far more immediately inconvenient, and, whatever æsthetic and historic interest they may possess for the tourist, who views them in the course of his travels and takes care to live somewhere else, they are intolerable to those who are bound by circumstances to dwell in their very midst, and accept all their discomforts in lieu of modern improvements. What wonder then if the heir to such buildings becomes a revolutionary, and sweeps away what he regards as mere relics of the past, in order to make room for the living present? Like nature he cries out:

> A thousand types are gone;
> I care for nothing, all shall go.

> Thou makest thine appeal to me;
> I bring to life, I bring to death,
> The spirit does but mean the breath;
> I know no more.

Let the dead bury their dead! Life is short, and are we to cast away its possibilities and spend our time listening to the voices of those who are gone?

As we often hear it said nowadays, this is an age of the young. Men and women keep their freshness and vigour to a more advanced time of life than formerly, and the young have a larger share in the government and administration of the world. The result is a certain impatience with anything antiquated, and an eagerness for the future which leads sometimes to a disregard for the past. The conservative element of the world reacts against this extreme by its contrary, and thus the question divides men into two camps, as it were of the past and present. Now when the matter reaches this point there is no further doubt as to which side victory will ultimately favour. For the past, as past, can never hold its own against the present; it may, by sheer tyranny, maintain its ascendency for a time, but its final doom is as certain as that of an organism invaded by a race of microbes for which it had no preparation or counteracting influence. But the victory of the present will be, in such cases, gained with considerable loss to itself. The fairy godmother has not been bidden to the christening; and, though she is powerless to destroy the new-born infant, she can still leave her curse upon it, a curse which will only be wiped out by long years of toil and suffering, and which might have been avoided had anyone been

at the pains to invite her blessing instead. For though the past, as mere past, has no claim on our homage or allegiance, it exercises a right over us by reason of that continuous stream of life which reaches us therethrough; and though bones, merely as dead bones, have no right to cumber the earth, they may still be entitled to inhabit it when they rise again in response to the call of the spirit.

In the following pages we are about to deal with a few questions affecting a side of life not of great interest to all, but of most vital interest to the few, or many, directly touched by it. To the busy world at large asceticism, with its various doctrines and systems, is but a detail, and influences them only remotely. But there is a smaller class to whom it is the one absorbing interest of life, affecting their whole existence for weal or for woe. Therefore, though not universally important if judged only by its direct bearing on mankind in general, it acquires a very distinct claim on our attention by the fact of its prominent place in the lives of a few; the chief occupation of even a small section of mankind is surely worth the attention of the whole reflecting community. And this is the more certain because nothing can deeply interest a part of the world without eventually interesting, in some manner, the whole, even though that interest be almost unconscious to the majority.

Hence we venture on the discussion of a few points in the teaching of spiritual writers which may be said, in the eyes of the multitude, to present the appearance and characteristics of dead bones strewed over the surface of the earth, but which are, nevertheless, treasured by another

section of the community as the most precious deposit they have received from the past. And the question we have to ask ourselves is not whether dead bones should be kept or cast away, but whether or not they shall live again. For we have no right to condemn ourselves or others to feed on ashes and cinders, and, as even grief for the dead becomes an empty, selfish thing when it lives on a mere memory and is not rooted, like Christian sorrow, in love for what is living and eternal, so reverence for the past becomes rather reprehensible than admirable when it takes the form of a sentimental lingering amongst the tombs of the dead. *Non est hic; surrexit.*

Amongst the following essays some deal with subjects to which these remarks cannot strictly apply. The value of prayer and the sacraments is not, for Catholics, subject to discussion in the purely objective order. If these, too, seem to us as dead bones, it is within and not without that the re-animating spirit is needed. But with regard to some purely ascetical doctrines it is a fact that much of the teaching of the past has grown lifeless and stereotyped to a large number, who are thus tempted to cast forth as ashes what they had been led to consider the most excellent food of life.

Such as these have to ask themselves the question: "Shall these bones live again?" and it is in their own souls they must find the answer. The life must flow, if it flow at all, rather from them to the bones than from the bones to them. They must find in the past what will nourish their present, or leave the past alone. Those doctrines came forth living, in the first instance, from their earliest teachers. Let them live again

in the minds of those who adhere to them if they are to be preserved at all. In so far as they have truth in them, that truth is eternal, and capable of being adapted to the newer knowledge of the present. We have then to penetrate to the kernel, stripping from it the husks formed by long usage and routine. And when we have done this, and then only, shall we be in a position to judge whether they are to be finally cast off or retained.

I

Commandments and Counsels

It has been said that a religious vocation is a call to live "in eternal relations" with men and all things; to drop out of life all that will have to be dropped at the hour of death, keeping only that which is to endure for ever.

Whether it be always understood in so pure and high a sense may be doubted, but it is probably because of some such implied meaning that a religious is represented as being in a peculiarly desirable position at the hour of death, as having much to gain and little to lose, as being already acquainted with the country to which he is about to pass, and a stranger in that which he is leaving behind him.

Distinction, in this world, is founded, to some extent, on opposition and antagonism. We cannot choose one set of interests without excluding another; our friendship with one society makes us foreign to another, and our love of our own country makes us, in some sense, exclusive in regard to other nations. Our various forms of union are partly constituted by the sense of something beyond that is extraneous and foreign; and the whole world might come to regard itself as a single nation were it to enter into relations with the inhabitants of another planet, who should seem at once strange and antagonistic.

In the same way religious life comes to be understood still more as something opposed to the ordinary interests of the outer world than as something with a definite aim and end of its own. Hence the intense suffering of those who find themselves, by the work of tyranny or revolution, cast back into the midst of that which they had abandoned; their very life appears to be lost along with that opposition in which it seemed so largely to consist.

But we feel instinctively that such a conception of religious life is prejudicial and unsatisfactory, and that it by no means fulfils the higher ideal suggested in the words just quoted. However necessary a certain distinctness may be to the attainment of a particular end in the spiritual order, this distinctness must be taken as the means, and not as the aim itself. There is nothing actually ennobling in mere separation and seclusion from the life of humanity at large; this were a loss rather than a gain unless it substituted a deeper sympathy with the more fundamental interests of mankind.

There are two ways in which religious life may be contrasted with the ordinary Christian obligations. By some the evangelical counsels would be likened to a garden of peculiar quality and fragrance, enclosed within the vaster field of the commandments, to which these latter serve both as vestibule and outwork. Hence no one could enter this more sacred enclosure without passing first through the domain of universal obligation; a man would have to be a Christian, and a good Christian, before he could aim at being a religious. By others the simile would be precisely inverted, and the Christian

life and commandments would constitute the inner fortress, surrounded by the evangelical counsels as a bulwark; so that a man would become a religious mainly in order to be a Christian—the latter would be the end and the former the means.

The first view is that of the simple-minded faithful, who so assume its truth that they would often consider it a kind of profanity to look for proof of the mere keeping of the commandments in one dedicated to the life of the counsels. They regard the religious from a special standpoint, and would almost more readily overlook the breaking of the general law than the transgression of his special obligations.

The religious themselves—and they are many—who hold the same opinion as to the nature and end of their life, must regard it simply as a loss, and a grievous loss, if they should ever be deprived of the external embodiments of those peculiar obligations they have undertaken. The monk, who is forced from the cloister into the world, must simply gather his skirts around him, and keep himself, as far as may be, from defilement. It is assumed that the virtues practised by the ordinary Christian are more excellently contained in those harder ones he has learned to exercise. He who has vowed poverty must surely be humble and contented; he who has vowed obedience must be detached, yielding and unselfish—and so of the rest. Alas and alas! but such is not invariably the case, and the too frequent occurrence of the opposite should surely raise some doubt as to the entire correctness of the conception. Hence the best religious will surely pause and ask himself if his life is

really an improvement on Christianity, or not rather an attempt at its more complete fulfilment. Considered according to the letter, and as representative of external duties, the counsels are an advance on the commandments, inasmuch as they add further prescriptions; and it would be folly to undertake the more severe duties until the easier ones had been fulfilled. But, taken according to the spirit, the real value of any religious rule, whether active or contemplative, mild or austere, consists in that eternal element which must enter into the life of every soul, secular or religious, whatsoever his education, surroundings and definite beliefs may be.

It is by overlooking this truth that religious themselves have too often lowered their own ideal; they have thought to confer on their life some peculiar prestige, and have, quite contrarily, robbed it of its universal character. We have all a tendency to think we raise ourselves by depreciating those who stand about us, and so it has been thought more creditable to the monastic life to insist on its peculiar advantages—advantages not shared by all—than to find in it a more condensed element of that Christianity to which we are all called. But, in fact, that which is taken in its true proportions is also taken in its highest proportions, higher than those we would have given it; the eternal is also the universal, and it is our narrowness and limitations that lead us to glory in our special privileges and distinctions rather than in our personal share of that in which we all meet and are one.

The word "state" has contributed not a little to the view under discussion. That hunger for rest and completion, which pursues us, in the

spiritual as in the material order, has too often prevailed over the nobler instinct of progress. The stability and permanence of religious life, the teaching of the Church as to its high and lasting value, has made many forget that nothing spiritual is unchangeable, and that any life is called a state rather by reason of what it excludes than of what it contains. The negative element and the definite obligations of religious life are surely no more its essence than the strict observance of the marriage vow is the essence of true conjugal union and affection. This by no means alters the fact that the evangelical counsels respond to the special aspirations of a soul that is called to a more direct and concentrated life of union with God.

To revert then to our simile, according to its more negative and human element religious life is an enclosure within an enclosure, a peculiar form of Christianity not intended for all, and demanding, prior to its acceptance, a certain general proficiency in the more rigid obligations of the Christian life. But, according to its divine and eternal element, it is but a more intense embodiment of the aspirations common to every soul striving towards God through Christ, and, thus regarded, all its regulations, however sacred, are but an effort to accomplish more completely that which is the will of God for every one of us.

The religious then who should, as may often happen in these days, find himself cast forth from his monastery into the world, has not to contrast the life of the commandments with that of the counsels, as that which is lower with that which is higher, but to rest rather in that most sacred essence which is common to both. We can aim

at nothing higher than Christianity, and we are all bound to aim at that; religious life is in order to Christianity, and not Christianity in order to religious life. Great as may be the advantages which one kind of life possesses over another, in order to this end, we must never forget which is the means and which is the end. No rule can comprise greater perfection than the Gospel, and the Gospel was given that it might be preached to all men.

II

The Buried Life

THERE is a good deal of ambiguity in our use of the word prayer, and it is loosely applied to very different actions. In the more ordinary and superficial sense we speak of the time we devote to certain fixed spiritual exercises as our time of prayer, but in speaking thus we are still dimly conscious that these same spiritual exercises are not all that we mean by prayer. We have been told to "pray always," and yet we know that both mind and body must frequently be employed in other things. Some make ineffectual, and even mischievous, efforts to meet this difficulty by reiterated momentary acts of recollection. Far be it from us to say that such acts are not useful, and even necessary, when wisely exercised; but the practice engenders falsehood and confusion when it is urged upon us as though such frequent ejaculations were the best substitute for that continual prayer which is impossible in this sense, however much it may be prescribed in another. Ten separate moments of recollection in one hour do not constitute a continuous prayer, any more than one definite offering in the same space of time; and injudicious advocates of this excessive repetition may some day find themselves answerable for many a tired head and weakened power of application to prayer or

anything else. We have each our own constitution, which must be consulted in the matter; we must avoid laziness, but we must also avoid strain; and whatever measures we may adopt we must at least convince ourselves that continual prayer cannot mean frequent, numbered acts of prayer.

We have then to distinguish our spiritual or religious exercises, which may be called prayer in a more external and superficial sense, from that continuous prayer which is not a means but an end, and which is indeed the very life of the soul, the life of union with God, the life of love. This is the prayer that must not be interrupted, that inner communion between the soul and God which can never cease so long as the soul is alive in the supernatural order.

To make the matter clearer we may compare this inner life of grace and love with our natural human affections. The love of parent, spouse or friend, is a continuous act or disposition of the soul, but cannot always be a direct object of thought, nor a definite and explicit occupation. There are times when we give immediate expression to such affections, such times corresponding in things human with the aforesaid spiritual exercises. But love in itself is not an occupation in the ordinary sense of the word, but an abiding spiritual activity; it is not a thing accomplished in time, but a living force. Thus when we speak to our friend and tell him of our love, we are not necessarily loving more at that moment than we did before, but we are revealing an indwelling reality. Our friend is always in some manner present in the very life of our heart and affections; were he ever entirely

absent, our love would be utterly dead. All this is mysterious and incomprehensible, but it is nevertheless undeniable. The fulness of life is not to be found on the tip of the tongue or the ends of the fingers. And if this be true of our relations to man, how much more of our relations to God! Here the hidden and explicit must bear a still larger proportion to the conscious and direct.

Prayer, therefore, in this fuller sense of a direction of the soul to God, cannot always be conscious, and hence the ambiguity which arises when we take it first in this deeper spiritual signification, next in its more outward meaning, and apply the same rules to both. Our definite spiritual exercises are the means to that hidden intercourse of the soul with God, which is never broken so long as she continues to love Him. They are as fuel to the fire, as food to life; not an end in themselves, but necessary to the maintenance of the deeper reality. This does not make them less vitally important, but rather more so. They are, in a measure, the commencement of eternity, for they make conscious that which is now sub-conscious, but which is destined to be eventually the one absorbing reality of heart and mind.

We lead now many different lives, connected only by a slender thread of unity. Our energies and attention are absorbed first by one thing, then by another; our waking thoughts are for the most part expended on the mere surface of life. It is not the things of greatest importance of which we habitually speak and think, but matters comparatively trivial, though of immediate necessity for the carrying on of our daily

life. Our nature is dull to the realization of eternal truths, or the petty details of this life would grow too intolerable; and when God lifts a corner of the veil, as He has sometimes done for His saints, then the earth becomes truly a place of banishment and exile, in which they cry out: "Alas, that my sojourning is prolonged!" They realize their own blindness, they suffer from their own fitfulness, they lie down in front of the door which was for an instant opened, and wait if perchance another glimpse shall be vouchsafed to them.

In others of us also, who are not saints, such moments of longing may arise. A poet has beautifully described the yearnings that will sometimes seize us to reach the mystery of our own buried life:

> But often in the world's most crowded streets,
> But often in the din of strife,
> There rises an unspeakable desire
> After the knowledge of our buried life.

It is the union of the soul with God by the life of charity which is truly that after which we are seeking, and it is our conscious prayer which can disclose it.

We measure our spiritual exercises by time, because we cannot measure them in any other way, but the object is simply to secure a certain amount of effort. Time itself is nothing; many hours spent in prayer would not be enough for God, let alone the limited hours we devote to it. God does not ask for one hour, nor for ten hours, but for our whole soul and our whole life. The value then of our spiritual exercises is not that they take up so much of our day, but that they affect

the whole of our eternity. We are as workmen paid by the piece; spiritual results are in proportion to the effort, and not to the time expended, and we only measure by the latter as the best means of insuring a proper amount of the former. How little we understand this when we hurry away, like day-labourers, at the stroke of the clock, thinking that something is finished and ended and placed to our credit! Material labour can be measured by moments and hours; the work of the soul is eternal. Conscious prayer is as the angel that stirs the waters of the spiritual life, that pool which is dead except it be in continual motion.

What mental prayer is to the hidden activity of the soul, that in its turn is vocal prayer to mental; an external effort, rousing and rendering conscious the internal life. We use gesture and words, not only to express our interior thoughts and feelings, but likewise to stir and re-create them. And, in like manner, our thoughts in mental prayer are not only the expression of the deepest life of the soul, but contribute also to its strengthening and expansion. Our deliberate conscious efforts in the spiritual life cannot be continual. Vocal prayer, which occupies the body as well as the mind, must be more intermittent than mental prayer; and mental prayer, which occupies the conscious thoughts, cannot be continuous, like the underlying life of grace and charity which it nourishes and discloses.

There are times when vocal prayer seems like words without thoughts, and mental prayer like thoughts without meaning. This is what we call aridity, spiritual dryness and desolation.

We suffer from it not only in our relations with God, but also in our relations with man; there are times when we feel as insensible to natural affection as we do to divine, when everything has lost its glow and savour. These are seasons of apparent disruption; we are exiled not only from God, but from ourselves, for in truth it is in ourselves that He is to be found. Our danger at such times is that we shall be so impressed by a temporary phase as to lose memory of the past and hope for the future. It is hard to believe that we ever did see what we are now unable to behold. We know that if what we once saw was really there at all, it must be there still; hence our present blindness makes us distrust our past vision. In such a crisis the only remedy is blind unswerving faith—faith in God, faith in the better part of ourselves. Outside proofs will avail but little, for it is the faculty of seeing that is itself at fault. Indeed, the only argument that can appeal to us is the evident fact of our present suffering, for there cannot be a sense of loss unless there was something to lose; those born blind do not realize their privation.

In practical daily life we often have to carry on our intention through periods of depression and indifference. We go on, not because we care, but because we have cared, and shall care again. There is the same necessity in times of spiritual desolation; we have, as it were, to maintain our own continuity, to carry on the work and wait until its results and advantages are once more apparent, when "the winter is past and gone, and the flowers appear in our land."

But, besides the desolation and dryness of

which we have been speaking, there is another kind of suffering to which we are subject in prayer, that is to say, when we come away from it more tempted and troubled than we were before. Sometimes the hours of our spiritual exercises are those in which temptation surges most strong and violent. But this is easily understood if we bear in mind our first thought, namely, that prayer is an uncovering of the inward life. In proportion then as it is more real it will make us more conscious of the spiritual combat that is going on within. Prayer that consists in merely superficial sentiment may leave us unmoved in the midst of temptation; it does not go deep enough to reach the spiritual battle-field, which lies hidden far below. Hence in times of great trial the best proof of the reality of our prayer will be in the fact that it causes spiritual disturbance; it makes manifest the war that is being waged between the higher and lower instincts. The reward of perseverance is victory and tranquillity, but the method by which they are attained is "not peace, but the sword." In heaven prayer will be synonymous with joy and peace, because our life will have been made one; disruption and division will no longer be possible, the beatitude of the soul will be also its deepest reality. But on earth this deepest life consists rather in continuous pain and struggle; hence, in disclosing the one, prayer must also disclose the other, and the truest and best prayer will be that which makes the soul realize most fully the tragedy and pathos of its actual existence.

We understand then what spiritual writers mean when they tell us to make our prayer

practical, and to aim at some definite resolution. We are not to understand this as though prayer were chiefly practical, in so far as its result is merely external. What is meant is that it is not to be a matter of superficial sentiment, of feeling in the more trivial sense of the word. Prayer is practical when it affects our outer conduct, but still more when it affects our inward activity, and the best of resolutions is that which contains in itself its own fulfilment, being not merely a promise for the future, but a performance in the present, a subjection of the soul to her Maker, and an advance of the kingdom of God within her. Such prayer is not the utterance of a passing emotion, but the expression of a lasting fact; it achieves something in the present, and prepares the way for greater achievements in the future.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," not only in so far as much of the good that we behold is the fruit of the hidden prayer and tears of unknown saints, who lift their hands in the darkness and pray for those who do not pray, but also because the nobler part of that which is wrought is of its nature invisible, and only to be revealed in the light of a fuller spiritual consciousness.

III

Devotion and Devotions

"It is good for pain to be taken from man, but it is better for man to be taken from pain."—*Juliana of Norwich.*

THERE is a beauty in the theological meaning of the term "devotion" which has been lost to its ordinary, every-day sense. We should have rather to use the cumbersome word "devotedness" to express the signification of St Thomas, and that which we have in view in the use of the word in the following essay. We will, however, retain the original term, with the proviso that readers shall understand it in the accepted theological sense, as meaning the English "devotedness" or the French *dévouement.* It is according to this meaning that we want to contrast "devotion" with "devotions," not as things contradictory and incompatible, but as different manifestations of spiritual life, of which the latter should sub-serve the former, should at once spring from it and minister to it, if they are to preserve their character as legitimate products of the spiritual life, and not rank, unwholesome, fungoid growths.

The Church reserves to herself a certain right of discrimination in this matter. She meets the various devotions that arise with approval, or toleration, or condemnation, according as she judges them sound in doctrine or the reverse, and helpful or harmful or indifferent to the

spiritual life. By her approval she guarantees that they are sound in doctrine and have it, at least, in them to be helpful to salvation and sanctification; by her toleration she ensures to them a certain negative virtue and harmlessness, without any assertion as to their being actually ennobling and useful. But here her mission ends. It is not as with the sacraments, which she presses on the use of the faithful; it is not as with her doctrinal definitions which are to help on the life of spiritual knowledge as the sacraments that of grace; in this other field she assumes to herself no final responsibility, except in the merely negative manner which we have indicated; she approves in the name of doctrine, she permits in the name of liberty, but she commands nothing except that toleration and respect which she has herself manifested, and she refuses to take up that burden of individual responsibility which many are too ready to fling on to her shoulders at every turn of the spiritual life.

The right of choice and its duties remain to the individual soul, which has to manifest its loyalty by not cursing that which the Lord has not cursed, and by exercising, in things religious, that temperance and courtesy which are the spiritual counterpart of social good manners. We are not bound to practice all the devotions which the Church declares holy and harmless; but we are bound to restrain our criticism in the spirit of respect for our fellow Christians, and we are also called on to conform to certain general usages under pain of becoming boors in our religious communion. For, though not generally recognized, there are certain faults of the critical spirit which spring rather from want of manners

than from want of faith; they need to be regulated, not by doctrine but by discipline, and they are akin to the eccentricities of those who think to renovate society by living in a tub or wearing a sheepskin at a dinner party. Whatever importance Diogenes may have possessed from the point of view of philosophy, his manners were the result of personal roughness, not of universal truth; he had been none the worse philosopher for being a gentleman also.

Granted then the approbation or toleration of the Church, which ensures to certain devotions a general usefulness or, at any rate, harmlessness, and which demands, on our side, at least courtesy and respect, there arises the further question of their acceptance and use as regards ourselves personally. To be good in general they must be in accordance with faith and the general laws of the spiritual life; to be good for any one of us individually they must not be superfluous, nor oppressive, nor formal, nor artificial, but must minister to our true spiritual needs, and foster our true spiritual aspirations. To maintain that, because they are tolerable for the Church in general they are therefore useful to each soul in particular, would be to cast on the Church a weight of responsibility in regard to each individual soul which she is not prepared to assume. The Catholic who should arbitrarily decline one sacrament or another, intended for him and directed to his use, would so far weaken or destroy the bond which united him to the rest of the Church, and made him a participant of those graces which can only come to him from communion with the whole mystical body of Christ; but quite other should be his attitude

and conduct in regard to those spiritual practices, which are rather the contributions of the individual to the Church than of the Church to the individual. Their essential value will, it is true, depend on their conformity with the spiritual whole, and they too, in a certain sense, owe their origin to that Divine inspiration which breathes through the entire body and through each organ that composes it, yet nevertheless are they, in themselves, rather the gift of the member to the communion than of the communion to the member, and are, consequently, to be tested, and taken or left according to their suitability in each particular case. Our strength and our time are both limited; the force which is expended in one direction cannot be expended in another; hence it behoves each one of us to take those things which will help us forward and develop the best of which we are capable, and not to fritter our energies on mere amusements and pastimes. Nor is it a question of choosing between good and bad, a question which admits of a final answer, but of choosing between good, or indifferent, and better—a question which should recur for solution on countless occasions in every life.

By some, who are critically disposed in the matter of devotions, the question is far too roughly answered by a mere appeal to antiquity. To such as these what is old is respectable, and what is new contemptible. They will confound in one category the Bread of St Anthony, the extravagant outbreak of enthusiasm for the utterly unknown St Expeditus, and such deeply spiritual, though modern, devotions as that of the Sacred Heart. Devotions not known to the first

ages should not be known to ours, and they will only worship in the manner of their ancestors. But they might as well bid the woods and meadows clothe themselves in the same shape and colour each succeeding spring as ask that human minds and hearts shall find the same mode of expression in each century. The general features may remain the same in forests of trees and cities of men, but the tints and shades will vary indefinitely, and at no two epochs be entirely alike. And though new things may sometimes arise from the decay of a life which seeks thus to hide its decrepitude, they spring also from a fulness and exuberance of energy which is bound to seek an outlet. Thus there are devotions which bring with them no really fresh thought, no impulse to spiritual progress; they have their day, and cease to be, leaving no trace of their passage. But others, though they may bear in them the defects of an over sanguine temperament, and may need pruning and restraint, cannot, nevertheless, live or die without leaving some result behind them.

Thus there may be a resistance to new devotions, just as there is a resistance to new thought, which comes from sheer lifelessness on the part of the objectors; they dislike all that disturbs routine and forces the attention to any fresh effort. But there may, on the other hand, be a reasonable repugnance on the part of those to whom new pieties are unattractive, either because they bring in themselves no fresh stimulus, or because the energy is already fully employed elsewhere, and the liturgy and sacraments are all that is needed to maintain spiritual strength and vigour.

Hence the question to be asked in regard to the various devotions that arise is not "Are they new, or are they old?" but "are they fresh and living? or are they decayed and effete? are they living shoots or fungoid growths?" That they should be new is, in itself, no reproach, for, in a certain sense, every living act and apprehension is also a new act and apprehension; in the spiritual order mere repetition is impossible. But newness or novelty becomes a mark of reproach when it signifies rather some new mechanical adaptation than some fresh outbreak of life, and such devotions are to be condemned as supply us with pious devices and artificial practices instead of rousing us to a fuller apprehension of the "Beauty ever ancient, ever new."

Vetustatem fugat novitas. It is the old age of routine and decay, the withering of extremities to which the sap can no longer reach, that calls for a certain renewal; the renewal of realization and comprehension, of young and ardent effort; the renewed infusion of eternal strength into mortal weakness and weariness.

It is then the devotions that spring from a new and a personal apprehension of everlasting truths that will be indeed a contribution from the individual soul to the universal treasury. They are as the flowers that spring from the undergrowth of our spiritual life, and that are lovely and fragrant to ourselves and the rest of mankind in proportion as they are rooted in our holiest needs and aspirations.

For it were but an unreasonable optimism to maintain that, in such matters, there is no danger of materialism and excess; or to deny that there are practices of piety which spring

rather from temporal greed than from spiritual earnestness. Not that they are to be condemned simply because they are the expression of material needs. Our "daily bread" comprises that of the body as well as that of the soul, and Christ had pity on physical suffering as well as spiritual disease. But again it is a case of distinguishing, not between what is bad and what is good, but between what is good and what is better. Even though God should allow us to come to His knees in all our troubles, yet surely a grown man should not run to his Creator with the same trifles as a child; nor should those who aim at the highest spiritual development adopt practices that tend rather to materialize than to elevate their religion. We have, in fact, to exercise self restraint in this matter, as in all others, and to recognize frankly that we are none of us, however spiritually minded, so constituted that we are incapable of slipping at times into lower forms of spirituality than those to which God calls us. In some cases the principle of selection is plain and obvious; in others it is far harder and more subtle; nor is the attitude of the cultivated always so entirely different from that of the uncultivated, though it may manifest itself in a more refined manner. Some devotions are based on love, but others are based on desire; and even spiritual desire is not, as Abbé Laberthonnière would tell us,* by any means synonymous with love. Desire would bring God to us, love would take us to Him; and it is precisely from these contrary tendencies that particular devotions of a twofold kind arise, based respectively on the effort to reach God through the laws of that determinism

* See *Dogmatisme Moral,* by L. Laberthonnière.

by which we are surrounded, or to escape this spiritual exertion by seeking His immediate intervention, and bringing Him, even in the material order, between us and the forces of nature.

It is commonly urged in defence of the countless devotions, directed almost exclusively to the obtaining of temporal favours, that they both prove and foster a strong child-like faith, and that, consequently, even if they dip occasionally to the side of superstition, they should not be ruthlessly eradicated, lest we root up the wheat along with the tares. True as all this may be we are surely urging the proposition to a most false extreme if we go on to assume therefrom that no one can have a deeper trust in his Creator than the man who summons Him instantly to his aid when he wants a change in the weather or a slight improvement in his circumstances. How much higher is the faith that cries out, "Though Thou shouldst slay me yet will I trust in Thee!" and how much deeper the confidence that asks as proof no miracle, but just what Aquinas asked as reward, "Only Thyself, Lord!"

The Gospel figure of the faith that can move mountains has been pressed with a literalness that is surely not justified when we consider its obviously metaphorical character. It has been implicitly argued that, if prayer made with sufficient faith is capable of casting a mountain into the sea, then is it, *à fortiori*, able to work the finding of a lost key or the catching of a train. But were the words ever spoken in such a sense? And were not the very mountains figures of things far greater, and far more hopelessly beyond our power than any earthly obstacle?

Closely connected with such a temper of mind

is the pious disposition of those who, though not so intent on temporal favours, are led by the same principle to ascribe all that happens, whether in the temporal or the spiritual order, to the direct intervention of Providence. The results of their own actions, the results of everybody else's actions, everything is at once ascribed to the over-ruling wisdom of God. Such persons are not, like the former, greedy for temporal favours alone, but, holding a similar view, they turn it to a more spiritual purpose, and base their ideal of resignation and conformity to the will of God on the notion that He is immediately and solely responsible for all that happens to them.

One unfortunate result of this doctrine is a kind of inverted fatalism, if we may thus describe it. For if fatalism, in the ordinary sense, is the invasion of the territory of free will by natural law, so, in this inverted sense it may be said to be the invasion of the same domain by Providence; and if, in the first case, the result is an inactivity arising from the sense of helplessness, in the second it is a similar lethargy based on the apparently pious motive of reverence for the divine will. In either case there is a lessening of personal responsibility, a weakening of the bond which connects our actions with their results.

Those who inveigh against objectionable excesses in certain devotions often fail to see that it is not the invocation of one saint or another, the adoption of this or that prayer or practice, that is to be criticised or condemned, but the lack of true asceticism in those who profess to cultivate it, and the lowering of a spiritual ideal to temporal needs. And the

remedy to all that is false and injurious in this state of mind is only to be found in that same spiritual philosophy which is as far from embracing fatalism as it is from denying fate.

For, as St Thomas tells us, though certain doctors objected to the use of the word "fate," because of the falsehoods and superstitions which had grown up around it, a fate there is, nor can we altogether withdraw ourselves from its control. It is the power conferred on secondary causes, subject, indeed, to the all-embracing Providence of God, but not effaced thereby. And, in so far as anything is further removed from the first and ultimate cause, so is it also more closely entangled in the web of fate.*

If then it is bad philosophy to refer events simply to their first cause and neglect those secondary and immediate, so is it bad spirituality to ignore the dealings of fate in our desire to be ruled entirely and directly by divine Providence; as the first is slothful philosophy so the second is slothful spirituality. And we need to recognize this truth, for too often it has been carelessly assumed that it is a stronger faith which sees the immediate action of God in every secondary event than that which renders to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and to God that which is God's. And, with the same laxity of consideration, it is thought more pious to expect and to invoke a direct interposition of Providence in our least concerns, to seek to gather miracles from the hedgerows, than to recognize the omnipotent hand of our Creator as the first mover in a chain of causes, whose activity and being both have their source in Him.

* Summa. P. I. Quest. cxvi.

Nor is it surprising that this horror of physical fate, one of the deepest instincts of our nature, should thus influence us duly and unduly even in our higher spiritual phases. Were the beliefs of men as realistic as they are not, there would, perhaps, be no thought more maddening than the idea, necessarily involved in an atheistic creed, of our entire subjection to the laws of a rigid determinism.

That men, whose theories bind them to such a view, do not perceive the full bitterness of its consequences is surely a result of that dulness, that lack of living and continuous apprehension, which is at once so painful and so necessary to our time of exile and phenomenal existence. If, as an American writer has said, those who hold Calvinistic theories as to predestination and salvation ought to go mad were they sufficiently intelligent to do so, why not at least as much those who believe that their palpitating, sensitive human hearts are being spun round on the wheels of blind necessity?

Putting aside the fact of revelation, and avoiding all discussion of the rival theories of progression and degradation, is it not probable that the instinctive shrinking from such a solution of the problem of life would always have been an important factor in the striving after a personal religion, whether polytheistic or monotheistic? If man, left to himself, begins by ascribing personality and divinity to the powers of nature, may it not be in part owing to this desire to escape from mere deterministic force, as well as to the fact of the same theory offering an easy and natural solution to the savage or childlike mind? It is not an ennobling religion that

seeks to propitiate the angry deities that dwell in storm and fire, in hail and snow, but it is a truly human instinct that would rather commit itself to such intelligent, though capricious, powers than to the fatality of meteorological necessity.

Nor has the tendency entirely faded away with the advance of culture and enlightenment, nor does it survive only in the more ignorant section of the community, but evinces its presence, from time to time, amongst the most enlightened. Should we not many of us acknowledge, if we had courage to do so, that there are moments when, under the pressure of an accidental disaster, we would gladly ascribe the origin of our misfortune to an intelligent rather than a fortuitous cause, and could find it in our hearts to seek relief in passionate recourse to local deities? It is obvious that our better judgement will restrain us, and that we shall regard such stirrings with the contempt that we bestow on other inevitable weaknesses, but we shall, nevertheless, realize the kinship of such instincts with those of our savage ancestors and our savage contemporaries, which have been and are the basis of a religion to them, whereas they are but a survival in us.

And yet this very word "survival" suggests a theory not altogether just, for it seems to assume that the aforesaid instinct is but a crazy remnant of previous folly, a dark corner to which the light of knowledge has not yet penetrated. But it is in reality much more than this, and is, in its fundamental character, as ineffaceable as the human soul itself. For it is based on the ineradicable longing to have some hold of, some interest in all that we behold, to be not mere

spectators, unnoticed and uncared for, but to live in the general life and have that general life live in us.

In that quintessence of egotism, Marie Bashkirtseff, we can listen to the outbreak of this primitive instinct in its most savage form: "It is I who suffer, O God! I! I! I!" As though she would say: "If you will not *pity*, at any rate you shall *know* what it is you are doing." It is a part of our very instinct of self-preservation to seek a certain recognition for our sufferings and our joys, and in so far as they pass beyond the power of man we seek to bring them under the notice of God.

All that is true and lawful in this impulse finds food and support in the Catholic doctrine of Divine Providence. That the very hairs of our head are counted, and that not a sparrow falls to the earth without the knowledge of its Father in heaven, are truths that, once assimilated, remove for ever all dread of the iron hand of fate. But, as in all other spiritual truths, there is a process of apprehension in this one also, and we must pass more than once through the "dark night" of determinism in our progress to the full light and sunshine of Divine Providence. We want to burst through fate into the arms of God, but there is a continual shifting of the positions occupied respectively by God and nature in the process.

"It is full blissful," says Mother Julian, "for man to be taken from pain more than for pain to be taken from man; for if pain be taken from us it may come again."

And so it may be said that it is more blissful for man to be taken from fate than for fate to be

taken from man; for, in the latter case, it may, and it will, return again.

It is in our struggle to have fate taken from man that we endeavour to put God and all the powers of heaven in its place, and to induce Him to do with His own hands what His creatures have been fashioned to do. We clothe spiritual forces in earthly harness, and make them serve as direct ministers to our material needs. But we are, on the contrary, men taken from fate, when we burst through its toils to the "beyond," where, as spiritual beings, we are subject to spiritual powers alone. And this not by evading the action of matter on that part of us which is material, not by asking that the sun shall not burn nor the water cool, but by passing into that region where fire and water, heat and cold, rain, hail, ice and snow combine to bless the Lord.

And thus we see that the "devotions" most high and spiritual are those which take man to God, while the "devotions" less noble and elevating are those which would bring God to man. There is, in fact, a law of progress in the matter, and we do not ask the same of children and of savages as we do of the developed Christian. As the soul grows stronger in the service of its Maker it becomes more independent in its treatment of material obstacles, and less clamorous for outward signs of His presence. It is *good* to find God in the satisfaction of our material needs, but it is *better* to pass through them to the land of spiritual results, wherein we are subject to His hand alone.

IV

Catechism and Catechists

We often hear it said that one main cause of the frequent loss of faith at the present day is the lack of really efficient religious instruction, especially in childhood and youth. After a most inadequate training, the young mind is brought in contact with difficulties for which it is unprepared, and succumbs to the first attack of doubt. Hence continual efforts are being made to raise the standard of religious instruction in our Catholic schools, to make it at once more attractive and more thorough, and to render it such that it may compete in interest with other branches of knowledge. Some would almost appear to think that, by proper tuition, the truths of religion might be made as plain and undeniable as the facts of geography and history, and that it is the fault of the teacher when they are not so. They forget that they are dealing with two different orders of reality, and that the end of physical science is to enable us to deal with those outer and material facts, which press themselves upon our notice whether we will or no; whereas spiritual teaching is directed to the rousing of our consciousness to those inner realities which it is in our power to disregard. The one gives us scientific understanding of the things we inevitably see and hear and touch; the

other prepares us to see and hear and touch those spiritual objects which are not inevitably present to our conscious life.

Nor will it avail us to make use of the old argument that there are many facts, in the physical order likewise, which are present to us by faith and not by sight; for this kind of faith is entirely different from faith which is religious and spiritual. We believe that America exists, although we have never seen it; but we know too that others *have* seen it, and that we ourselves could see it had we opportunity and inclination to go there. But the messages which others bring us regarding the persons and events of another world are a matter of faith to them as much as to us; we cannot get back to some one possessed of sensible proof, nor could we, by any possible means, take a boat and investigate the truth of their assertions. We have here faith calling on faith, not testimony calling for belief; the knowledge to be imparted, like the method of imparting it, must therefore be entirely different in the two cases.

And when we glance at those who have enjoyed greater privileges in this matter of theological instruction, we see that it is not, after all, mere religious knowledge that preserves our belief from the inroads of doubt and criticism. On every side religious indifference has spread its roots, and it seems too often as though faith had been preserved in times of difficulty only to be cast aside in the days of prosperity.

Let us then clear the subject of exaggeration by acknowledging that faith cannot be entirely dependent on early or late tuition. However carefully the seed may have been fostered in

childhood, the plant can still be eradicated or allowed to wither from neglect in youth or maturity. It is more than unreasonable, it is downright unjust, to measure the worth of the teacher or the system by any case that may come under our observation. Strong and intricate as is the web woven by early custom and education, we are all free and self-determining beings, and, above all in a subject matter which regards no material necessity, are able to liberate ourselves to a great extent from the meshes of our youthful training. And as we can cast away the doctrines which were instilled into us before we had the power of discrimination, so can we likewise alter and develop our apprehension of them. We may become much less religious than our parents would have had us, much more religious, or religious in quite a different way. We may come under new influences which almost efface the results of the old, or we may hew out a path for ourselves, untrodden by previous feet.

Nevertheless, nothing will lessen the importance of early training in religious knowledge, and it is not without significance that so much has been said as to the necessity of some improvement and reform in the matter. If we are not wholly dependent on the instruction we receive in childhood, it is still one of the influences which most largely affects our whole career—and if loss of faith cannot be entirely ascribed to the fault of early teaching, it is at least unsatisfactory when we find that many years of tuition have effected no permanent result.

The question then that arises for solution is as to what are the qualities most essential in a religious teacher, and those qualities are

what go to constitute, in the fullest sense, the apostolic spirit. We often say that our teachers must be apostles, but we now want to know what we really mean by an apostle. For it is, at long last, the catechist, and not the catechism, that really signifies. The dullest formulary may become delightful when explained by the right teacher, just as it is intolerable when applied without life or inspiration.

And there is another error into which we may fall when we criticize any system of tuition, ascribing, that is to say, its lack of reality to its lack of agreeableness. Now it is unquestionable that nobody is the better for being actually bored, and that the teacher will succeed, in great part, in proportion to the interest which he succeeds in arousing; but we must not suppose from this that the task of realization will always be best advanced by the pleasantness of the lesson, nor that it is the system of education which throws the burden on the teacher instead of the pupil which will produce the strongest and most permanent results. There is some fear lest, by our modern efforts, we may turn out intellectual capitalists, who will live comfortably on an inherited fortune, instead of cultivating the land in the sweat of the brow.

The child is a born enthusiast, unsullied, as yet, by our boasted "common-sense," unshackled by convention; to none can we appeal more surely for the self-sacrifice demanded by every lofty cause. May it not be that we sometimes lose sheep from the fold not by making religion too hard, but by making it too easy? It is a secondary question, in the matter of religious instruction, how much there should be of learning

by rote and other drudgery. What we have to avoid is not difficulty, or even tedium to a moderate extent—since the latter is inevitable in every art and science from the playing of scales upwards—but unreality. There may be much to change and amend in the technique of the catechetical lesson; we must profit by the improvements that have been introduced into other branches of knowledge; but our main object is to find, not what will make religion more easy and agreeable, but what will make it more real; and children, like the rest of us, realize a thing in proportion to its call on their energy and responsiveness.

We may find pathetic proof of this in the intense and devoted affection which they often lavish on selfish and exacting parents. The mother who has cast her own life at the feet of her children, who has given herself so entirely that the giver was sacrificed and unnoticed in the gift, receives often a far less return of love than another who has kept her own interests prominently forward. The latter has made demands, and, in the matter of the affections, demand creates supply. The former may have chosen the better part, but the latter has chosen the more successful one; and it is a question whether the best education be not that which combines the advantages of both, which gives, but likewise asks a return.

What we need, then, in order to make our religious instruction efficient, is that it should be living and strenuous. The more energy and effort the pupil has to exercise, effort of mind and heart and will, the better will it be; and our present system is to be blamed rather for

asking too little than too much, for demanding mere mechanical effort instead of vigorous mental and moral exertion.

The task of rousing in a child this living sense of ultra-mundane realities has been beautifully treated in a modern French work* by the Rev. H. Bremond, S.J.

"Education du sens religieux," he writes in one of the articles: "à qui sait lire toute la difficulté du problème éclate déjà dans le rapprochement de ces deux mots. Un sentiment, en effet, ne s'éveille et ne se cultive que si on le met en face des réalités, existantes ou imaginaires, auxquelles il correspond. Or par quel moyen mettrons-nous, je ne dis pas l'intelligence de l'enfant, mais l'enfant lui-même tout entier, en présence d'une image personnelle, concrète, vivante de Dieu?"

He goes on to say that the mother seems to possess this secret instinctively, and points out how easily the sense of realization can be aroused in a child by personal influence, whether religious or superstitious.

"Les mères semblent avoir d'instinct ce secret. La prière, l'adoration passent de leur cœur au cœur de leurs enfants; les petites mains imitent le geste des mains maternelles par une contagion irrésistible, par cette transfusion inconsciente de pensées et de sentiments qui est, sur ce point comme sur les autres, la base mystérieuse, le premier degré de l'éducation. . . .

"D'ailleurs, rien n'est plus réaliste qu'une intelligence qui s'éveille, rien n'est plus incapable de se nourrir de paroles vaines et de pensées abstraites. Qu'elle lui parle de Dieu ou du démon,

* *L'Enfant et la Vie.*

des fées ou des anges, qu'elle menace d'un châtiment terrible, ou qu'elle fouille anxieusement les ténèbres pour voir si elles ne cachent pas la présence d'un voleur, une nourrice radoteuse n'a aucune peine à pétrir de réalité l'esprit et l'imagination d'un petit enfant." *

These words suggest a twofold question, in the answer to which we may find some help towards the solution of our problem. First, why is it the mother who succeeds best in imparting to her child some sense of spiritual realities? Secondly, seeing that a child is as easily convinced of the existence of fairies as of angels, of Jack the Giant-killer as of God, how is it that nevertheless, even in the nursery stage, the elements of romance and religion are so soon distinguishable, like diverging lines which spring from the same point but are prolonged to a totally different issue? No mother and no nurse finds it necessary to sit down gravely and explain to a child the difference between the people of fairyland and the inhabitants of heaven; whatever confusion may exist in the earlier stages, the child soon apprehends a distinction in the minds of his teachers which corresponds with and developes a like possible distinction in his own. In both orders he is dealing with beings that are invisible, but he soon perceives, from the conduct of those around him, that certain things are regarded as real, though outwardly imperceptible. And thus sacred stories and nursery rhymes are mingled together in homely confusion, while the spiritual personalities grow steadily in reality, and the figures of nursery fiction, though losing none of

* Idem. *Education du Sens religieux*, pp. 163-165.

their charm and thrilling interest, are relegated by degrees to the delightful land of make-believe, and continue their honourable existence under the conditions most suited to them. How and why is this? Why can the mother impart a sense of reality to her teaching which the schoolmaster envies in vain? And what is this principle of selection, unconsciously at work in the child-mind, which leads it so surely to distinguish, amidst the exuberant growths of its imagination, the pictures of spiritual realities from those of legend and fairyland?

Not that this discrimination is necessarily accurate. Some of the fairies may be classed as gods, some of the gods as fairies; but the point of importance is that the principle is there at work, and that the child is feeding two separate needs and instincts: the need of religion and the need of make-believe. And, equally, is the mother ministering in many cases as simply and unconsciously as the child responds, providing food for both without any fear of consequent indigestion.

The answer to this twofold question is surely that, in nursery instruction, whether it be conveyed through the formulas of the penny catechism or by any other means, we have that personal element which is indispensable to all religious teaching—it is soul speaking to soul, and heart to heart—the true mesmerism of personal influence is at work, and the child's intelligence is catching fire more from its contact with a believing and loving soul than from the actual information imparted. Child and mother are one to one, with God behind and in them both. When she speaks to him of fairies and giants

and ogres, she paints pictures in his imagination which he fills in with his own brush; when she speaks to him of the spiritual world she arouses in him that sense of the beyond, that consciousness of a voice dimly audible within him, which her perception renders comparatively clear and definite. In the mind of the child, as indeed in the mind of every one of us, there is some admixture of imagination, and the myth-weaving faculty has its share even in the holiest representations. But the true religious sense remains nevertheless essentially distinguishable, and is occupied in the recognition and fuller apprehension of what already exists, not in the creation of fictitious accessories.

This is a point which we do not sufficiently recognize. Our faith is not always so strong as we think it, and we are apt to speak as though it were rather the task of the teacher to make some representation of spiritual realities for the instruction of the pupil, than to open his eyes and help him to see what is already there. We know that grace is at work in the soul of the child that has been baptized, but we have not the courage and confidence to trust to this unseen fact, and we make the mistake which has been pointed out by a great philosopher in a kindred subject, when he says: "Et si, à la fin, on recourt à la grâce comme à une explication, c'est après coup, pour en faire le bouc émissaire de toutes les incompréhensibilités accumulées."*

The child distinguishes the kingdom of heaven from the land of fairies and giants, because the former is already within him; and it is the mother

* See Letter of M. Blondel in *Revue du Clergé Français*, February, 1902.

who can rouse him to the perception of these realities better than any other, just because her feelings towards him are more god-like. It is the glory, though sometimes the shame, the strength though often the weakness of a woman, that the personality of those she loves becomes to her as all the world. It is her glory, because it is a divine prerogative to distinguish the unique value of the single soul; it is her shame when it makes her ungodlike towards other souls to whom she does not hold the same relation; it is her strength because, armed with this sentiment, she has courage to do all things, to sell all things, for the one pearl whose value she alone on earth has fully recognized; it is her weakness in so far as her energies may become narrowed by concentration on a single object.

It has sometimes been urged against the Church that she draws women rather than men, and apologists have been caught with the bait, and have endeavoured to repudiate the accusation as a libel. It were wiser to acknowledge the fact, but to deny that it is to the discredit of any religious body to possess a large following of that half of the world which is the quickest to put theories to the test of practice. A woman may not be so good a judge of doctrines regarded from the intellectual standpoint, but she is prompt in showing their results on conduct, which is what interests her most; hence the spiritual teaching that failed to attract a feminine following would be probably one that was deficient in the practical order. So much is this the case that many women spend their lives convinced that a man must practise all that he teaches, in spite of all evidence to the contrary; and the

skilful director or eloquent preacher is quickly dubbed a saint by his feminine disciples.

From all this it becomes manifest that we can never hope to attain even the most modest level of success by means of any system, however perfect, apart from the character and convictions of the individual who applies it. If therefore our system of catechetical instruction needs continual reform, it is equally and more necessary to seek the right persons to work it, and their rightness is to be gauged, not so much by their intellectual capacity (though this must not be lacking) as by their moral qualities, and, above all, their spiritual earnestness. This last is the *sine qua non* of religious instruction, an earnestness based on an intense belief in the truths taught, and an equally intense desire to make those same truths live in the soul of the disciple. It is in this second quality that the true Christian mother will never be equalled; she to whom the soul of her child is as all the world. And it is in so far as every woman is potentially a mother that women teachers will often be more successful than men in this task. This is why our best religious must be, in some sense, surpassed by the ordinary good mother; for, though the former be as strong and stronger in her religious convictions, she cannot apply them with the same intensity to this individual soul. Hence, be it said in passing, it would be a terrible evil if, in our desire to secure more technical religious training for children, we were to help on that lessening of parental responsibility, that weakening of home ties, which threaten the moral destruction of the family.

We have spoken more of that which regards

the instruction of children than of the apostolate which may be exercised amongst adults. But, with whatever difference of application, the principles in both cases are more or less the same. The preacher and the teacher have a different mission, and we are here concerned with the apostolic character as exemplified in the teacher. A preacher addresses a multitude, the true teacher speaks to units, whether many or one; and persons must be dealt with personally, units individually. And for this we need, as we have seen, deep religious conviction, and a zeal that sets, as far as possible, in a personal direction. *Knowledge* may be imparted in a more or less external manner, *faith* can only be kindled by the contact of heart with heart.

The true apostle must be so conscious of the spiritual realities within his own soul that he is equally convinced of their existence in the souls of others; it is not by words and reasons, but by the ardour of his own faith that he kindles an answering flame in the hearts of others. Those who believe less profoundly are more anxious for outward expressions of conformity; they are not sufficiently sure of those inner realities to trust the hidden workings of God in the soul, but want continually to take the conscience to pieces and find out what is going on inside. "O ye of little faith!" it might be said to them; are you doubting of the very instincts to which alone your appeal must be made? and are you inculcating the need of faith while you yourselves believe in nothing but what you can see?

Personal faith and personal love—these are the requisites of the true apostle. He must believe in the soul to which he speaks, and must

trust and abandon the seed to its hidden responsiveness; and he must love with a god-like exclusiveness, yearning over the one sheep as though it were the entire flock. He must kindle the flame without asking to behold the light, for knowledge may be shared in words, but faith can only be communicated from soul to soul.

V

The Chastisement of our Peace

It is a sad though necessary fact that nothing is so solemn and sacred but that it may grow stale through use and familiarity. To do a thing daily means, only too often, to do it slackly, to do it monotonously, to do it as a mere matter of routine, to do it machine-wise and not as spiritual, living agents. And thus it happens that, through the daily frequentation of the holiest of sacrifices, a certain dulness and indifference may creep over the soul, such a lethargy as might overwhelm us even on Calvary itself, were we present at a continual repetition of the sufferings there undergone. And yet we would wish that the result were the very opposite, and we feel that each new participation in this eternal sacrifice should give us an increased appreciation and love of "the beauty ever ancient, ever new," a greater tenderness and sympathy for the sufferings "ever ancient, ever new," of the Divine Victim.

But how is this to be done? We cannot alter our nature, and it is an inevitable consequence of our physical and mental weakness that an act seems to make a fainter impression in proportion as it is more frequently repeated. We can only avoid this result by becoming ourselves active, and not mere passive, participants in the sacrifice of Christ. We are members of His mystical

body, and have to be offered along with our Head. But this offering must come from ourselves as well as from Him, and it must come each time as though it had never come before; it cannot be done once for all, like a material action, which is finished when performed, but it must be always living and continuous, like the actions of spiritual agents.

St Thomas tells us how the sacrifice of the Mass may be called the immolation of Christ in two ways. First, it is a figure and likeness of the Passion, and in this sense it is not unique, but there have also been other figures, such as the slaying of the Paschal Lamb. Secondly, it is our participation in the fruits of the Passion, and in this sense it is proper to this sacrament alone that in it Christ is immolated. In the first sense it may be called "ever ancient," in the second it may be called "ever new," being our own personal participation in the Passion of our Divine Head.

And our participation is not to consist in a mere reception of those fruits which have been won for us by the sufferings of Christ, but we are to take our share likewise as victims in that sacrifice by which our redemption has been wrought. Every Mass is to remind us, not only that Christ has suffered, but that we also are to suffer in union with Him, and to bear, along with Him, the wounds of all humanity.

And this in a twofold manner, for the sacrifice of Christ was both an immolation and an oblation, and such must ours be in likeness to His. He was immolated, cast into the mill, ground as the wheat is ground, by the hands of men, by the deed of His executioners; He was offered by

Himself alone: "No man taketh My life from Me; I have power to take it up and lay it down."

And thus in our sacrifice there must be both immolation and oblation, typified in what we bear and what we do, expressed in the prayer by which we ask God to take what belongs to Him and receive what we give.

Herein the victims of the new law are to differ from those of the old; the rams and sheep and the paschal lamb were unwilling victims, immolated by the hand of man, not offered by their own will; but this is to be a sacrifice, not of bleeding bodies, but of loving hearts. The blows inflicted, whether by God Himself or by God through man, are to be not merely borne but accepted, nay even, in a measure, self-inflicted.

The mother of Achilles thought she could do nothing better for her son than render him invulnerable to the darts of his enemies. And so do we all endeavour to case-harden ourselves, to shield ourselves in armour from head to foot, to render ourselves invulnerable in heart and thought and feeling. But this was not the way with a greater than Achilles. On Calvary, on the altar, Christ makes Himself not invulnerable but vulnerable; He lays Himself bare to the hand of friend and enemy alike. On the Cross He was one great wound from head to foot; the nerves that should be hidden were exposed, the body was rent and open; the tenderest touch of His mother's hand would have inflicted the keenest agony, for those nerves and muscles which should be covered lay exposed and bare. And so it must always be in proportion as we love. It is an inevitable result of love upon this earth that, in loving, we give to the beloved the power

of paining us; and the greater our love the greater also the corresponding power. For to love is, as it were, to lay heart and soul open to our friend; it is to strip ourselves, not only of all artificial armour, but even of the covering that nature herself provides for the feelings and the heart. And this is the love that Christ has for all men; the best and the worst have the power to wound, because He gives it to them by the mere fact of His love. We cannot love as He did, and therefore we cannot, even were we willing, become vulnerable as He was, for the one is in proportion to the other. He loved all, we love only a few; He loved intensely and continuously, we love only feebly and by fits and starts. But in every Mass we have a reminder of that love deeper than we can comprehend, inseparably associated with that suffering more intense than we can realize; and in the reminder we have also a stimulus to go ourselves and do likewise, at least as far as our weakness can carry us.

And for this we must glory in what we might be tempted to regard as our shame; we must rejoice to put ourselves at the mercy of men through the love that we bear them. We must deepen our love, though it deepen our pain; we must widen our love, though we increase the number of those who can hurt us. We must be immolated by the hand of those we love; we must be offered by our willing acceptance of what they do to us. The will of man must become to us, in a certain sense, the will of God, as was the will of His executioners to Jesus Christ.

We are sometimes wrongly inclined to suppose that the strongest man is he who can act on

others the while he remains himself impassive. But true spiritual influence cannot exist without a mutual relationship, our soul cannot touch that of another and remain itself intact. There is the susceptibility of strength as well as the susceptibility of weakness. The latter is the sensitiveness of those who are quickly impressed by all that affects their own feelings and interests; they are easily hurt and easily pleased, but all in accordance with their own subjective conditions; they are exceedingly dependent on their surroundings, but only in behalf of their private welfare. The former is the responsiveness of sympathy, and is in proportion to the capacity of entering into the mind of another and sharing its interests. It is a mark of strength because it testifies to the power of assimilation and expansion, and it is a result, not of passive quiescence, but of strenuous activity. It is the susceptibility of the soul that loves, and not of the soul that chiefly desires to be loved.

In the Mass, as on Calvary, we behold this blending of susceptibility and strength; the All-powerful becomes the All-suffering, and He who does all is likewise He who endures all. We can follow only from afar, but we can at least endeavour to preserve the same proportion. And thus shall we share in "the folly of the Cross" and the apparent weakness of Him who was laid upon it, for we shall be wise more for others than for ourselves, and our strength will be rather in our multiple capacity for pain than in the hardness and indifference which could preserve us from it.

VI

The Sacrament of Love

In the Mass we have the Blessed Eucharist as a sacrifice, in Holy Communion as the sacrament of union and the food of the soul—thus in the Mass the idea of immolation, in Communion that of donation.

> O res mirabilis! manducat Dominum
> Pauper servus et humilis!

Christ gives Himself to be our food; the highest for the lowest, the strongest for the weakest, the wisest for the most foolish.

In the physical order the strong prey upon the weak and convert them into their food; in the spiritual order, in the higher life, it is the weak who are to prey upon the strong; it is those who are wiser and better who are called on to give their light and their goodness for the weak and the foolish. In a shipwreck it is the duty of the strong man to stand by while the helpless, perhaps the useless, are saved. This is the great law of Christianity, enacted first on Calvary, repeated daily in the Mass. And each time that Christ gives Himself thus to be the support and food of our spiritual life we may think that He utters those words, "Go ye and do likewise"; give your strength to the weaker brethren as I give Mine to you; be his meat and his

support; waste yourself in his service; give, and give, and give, as I scatter my presence over all the earth, and am handled by the worthy and the unworthy.

Sumunt boni, sumunt mali; Christ does not protect Himself and His dignity, nor does He measure His time and efforts by their numerical results. The Sermon on the Mount, spoken to many, was not more beautiful and divine than the discourse to the Samaritan woman at the well. His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as ours. We grudge any efforts unless they are crowned with a sufficiently large visible result. The priest and the Levite hurried by, leaving the wounded traveller by the way. They would have said, doubtless, that they had many and important things to do; that the poor wretch at their feet was but a worthless fellow at best, suffering, perhaps in great part, from his own fault and negligence; that he was, at any rate, but one, whereas their work was with many. But they failed in the great Gospel law that we are to give ourselves without counting the cost, without asking an equivalent. We are to love "with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind," and we shall not be asked if this love has been expended on many, or on a few, or on one alone. It may be that the sacrifice of our whole self is asked for just one soul that God sends our way; according to the wisdom of the world this were to waste ourselves, but there is a higher computation than that of figures. There is a greater life that lies around us, and behind all that we see; in it the results of our actions lie hidden, for in every spiritual act is the seed of eternity.

And as in the Blessed Eucharist we have the lesson of giving, so we have also the lesson of union, for it is the sacrament by which we are made one with Christ our head, and with all His mystical Body. We think of it readily enough as a means of union with Him; we forget, only too often, that it is also a means of union with all humanity; with those we know and those we do not know; with the wise and strong as with the foolish and feeble.

There are many who think that this spiritual communion with all men is only valuable in so far as it makes us more zealous in our external labours on their behalf. It were probably truer to maintain the exact reverse, and to say that works of zeal are of greatest use in so far as they serve to strengthen and maintain this internal union, and make us realize more intensely our solidarity with all mankind. What we do for others in the practical order may be worthy of our best efforts, but it is, in itself, rather the means than the end; our chief and highest aim must be the strengthening and perfecting of the inner spiritual bond.

And as we are united to God by faith, hope and charity, so have these theological virtues their counterparts in our relations to all mankind. In this sacrament is the deepest mystery of faith; for if the divinity was hidden on the cross, the humanity is concealed on the altar—

> In cruce latebat sola Deitas,
> At hic latet simul et humanitas!

We must make our act of faith in both; we receive God, and we receive also the God made

man; we believe what is not evident to our senses.

We turn to our fellow-men, the members of the mystical Body of which we have become partakers, and we find that here again we have need of faith; of faith in that divine spark, that immortal soul, which is covered and stifled under so many dying embers; of faith in that very humanity which seems to perish at times, overwhelmed by mere animal propensities. We must believe where we cannot see; we must hope where all seems lost; we must love where there seems least that is lovable. We must believe in those who will not or cannot believe in themselves; they must be saved and supported by our faith when they have none of their own. There are crises in the lives of some when they depend perhaps on the faith and hope and love of one other soul for their own salvation. They have ceased to care for themselves and are on the road to complete disintegration, unless they are bound and held by the love of one human heart. To any of us may come such a call, and, like the Good Shepherd, we must leave the ninety-nine and go out in quest of that single soul for which Christ died; we must sell all that we have to buy one pearl, of which God has made us to realize the priceless value. In such a case we need to supply in our own person that which is lacking to the one for whom we labour; we must believe, and trust, and love in proportion as they can no longer exercise faith, hope, or charity, towards God or themselves. And as we may have to do it for one, so may we have to do it for the whole of suffering humanity. Some are called to labour thus inwardly for many in general, others for one

or two in particular. But, whether it be in the one way or the other, it is in this sacrament that we find both the symbol and the food of this spiritual union; and as every communion should be to us an increase of faith, hope and charity towards God, so should it be also an increase of our faith in man, our hope for man, and our love of man.

VII

Felix Culpa

As the Blessed Eucharist is the sacrament of giving, so Penance is the sacrament of forgiving; and as in the first we learn the lesson of donation, so in the second we learn that of acceptance, for it is sometimes harder to receive than to give.

We are not here concerned with the general theology of the question, but will regard this sacrament only on its practical side, taking that part which depends on our own action and conduct, aided by the grace of God; not that which depends on God alone. For the sacramental system is interwoven with the order of nature, and in each sacrament there is a certain symbolic correspondence with the instincts of the human soul. In Penance it is confession and contrition which depend chiefly upon our own exertions, and of these two we will take confession alone, since, if true and genuine, it implies and includes contrition.

To confess our sins is to accuse ourselves of them; quite a different thing from merely telling them. We may tell our sins by way of boast, we may tell them to intimate friends for the sake of sympathy; but to confess them is to acknowledge their guilt; to recognize them as an injury to another; to own to our action

in the matter and yet be willing to repudiate it. For it is not more contrary to the essence of true confession to deny our deed than to defend it; in the former case we try, fruitlessly, to obliterate the past; in the latter we endeavour to carry over the past into the future, and to crystallize the attitude in which we find ourselves. True confession consists in telling our deed in such a way that our soul is changed in the telling of it. What is done in the external and material order can never be undone or altered; but the spiritual act, which is in the soul itself, is never really past, and can be qualified and transformed, like all living things, by the infusion of new elements. Thus do we modify our sin in the telling of it, and become again pleasing instead of displeasing to the one against whom we have sinned. And this is done, not by making out an act to be other than it was, but, on the contrary, by taking towards it the attitude prescribed by truth and justice; conforming our mind in the matter to the mind of the one whom we have offended.

It is a fundamental instinct which makes us desire to confess our fault, whether against God or man; and there is a corresponding instinct which makes us exact this confession from another as a condition for forgiveness. Just as we cannot give to one who will not receive, so neither can we forgive one who will not acknowledge that he has wronged us. A magnanimous soul may, indeed, overlook the fault that has been committed against it, but forgiveness cannot be complete unless there be correspondence on the part of the recipient; he must open the door to mercy, or it cannot enter. Between men forgive-

ness means a mutual healing on either side. We are wounded ourselves by the injury we have committed, and we have inflicted a wound on the one against whom we have sinned. Like a deed of kindness, so also does an injury establish a relation between two souls, which can only be altered by the co-operation of both. There are wounds that can be healed only by the hand which inflicted them, and such are offences committed against a friend or fellow-being. It is by confession on the one side, and forgiveness on the other, that the relation can be renewed and restored; the one without the other must always be, to a great extent, ineffectual.

Our dependence in regard to God, and the fact that it is only through His mercy that we can either confess or be forgiven, makes our position different when we compare a sin against God with an offence against man. And yet, in so far as God asks of us just what our neighbour would ask, He seems to make us understand that there is a true analogy between the two relations. So long, then, as the sinner refuses to acknowledge his guilt, either explicitly or implicitly, he in a sense retains his fault by holding on to it. But by confession he puts himself on the side of his judge and co-operates with Him in its removal. And thus we see how this Sacrament is based on an instinct of human nature.

But why, it will be asked, should we confess our sins against God to an equally sinful man? Why not confess them to God Himself, and to God alone, as Protestants tell us?

In the first place it is a part of the whole sacramental system that the inward should be clothed in the outward, and the minister of the

Sacrament occupy, in a certain sense, the place of God. Secondly, this confession of our sin to another is a means of realizing our own guilt, of seeing it as others see it, and therefore in some way better as God sees it. This is not to say that we can ever give an adequate presentment of our state of soul by the mere confession of our formal sins. Our power of self-manifestation is even more limited than that of self-comprehension. But, notwithstanding this, the very effort to reflect our sin into the mind of another will give us a better realization of it. In this, as in all things, we are greatly dependent on others, and we need to establish some standard of comparison by which to judge our own deeds. We can bend God, in our imagination, more or less to our own mind; we cannot so bend man. We must see our guilt reflected in the mind of another in all its naked ugliness, stripped of the soft bandages of vanity and self-love. The man to whom we confess may be as sinful as we ourselves, but it is our sin we are confessing; putting it outside ourselves, and looking at it through the eyes of reason and justice.

We are not, then, surprised to find St Thomas urging the utility of confession to a laic when a priest cannot be had. "In case of necessity," he says, "the penitent must do his own part: i.e. be sorry, and confess to whom he can; and though the latter cannot perfect the Sacrament, and give absolution, which the priest alone can do, nevertheless the High Priest will supply that which is lacking."* It seems as though God never wearied of teaching us that in our fellow-man we shall find Him.

* Summa P. 3, Quest. viii, Art. 2. c.

From these considerations as to the nature of an accusation we shall learn also how contrary it is to the spirit of a good confession to accuse ourselves, in an unreal manner, of things which imply no true guilt. We are seeking, in our confessions, rather to know the truth better ourselves than solely to convey some idea to another ; we want to restore justice towards God, not to violate it towards ourselves.

Lastly, as we learn in communion that we are to give as we are given to, so in confession we are to learn to forgive as we are forgiven, to forgive others, and to forgive also ourselves. To forgive others by sundering them from their sins ; recognizing the deep, underlying good ; taking them for what they would be rather than what they are.

To forgive ourselves also, as God has forgiven us, not nourishing a kind of vindictiveness and self-hatred, but allowing the better part of ourselves, for the sake of which God has forgiven the rest, to be visible and prevail.

Sorrow for past sin does not mean that we are to regard them as unforgiven, but it is to be rather in the spirit of that cry of the Church : "*O felix culpa ! O certe necessarium peccatum !*" —Happy past fault ! that makes more evident the loving mercy of God and the goodness yet remaining in me. O necessary sin ! that has made me know Him and His love for me as I could never have known it otherwise.

VIII

Death before Dishonour

"Malo mori quam foedari"

ST FRANCIS, as we read in the "Little Flowers," was going one day from Perugia to St Mary of the Angels in company with brother Leo; and as they went he perplexed his poor friend by telling him of many things in which there was to be found no perfect joy. Brother Leo, wearied at length with the conundrums, turned round and asked a plain question, saying: "Father, I pray thee, in the name of God, that thou tell me wherein is perfect joy?" And St Francis thus made answer: "When we come to St Mary of the Angels, all soaked as we are with rain, and numbed with cold, and besmirched with mud, and tormented with hunger, and knock at the door, and the porter comes in anger and says: 'Who are ye?' and we say: 'We be two of your brethren,' and he says: 'Ye be no true men: nay, ye be two rogues that gad about deceiving the world and robbing the alms of the poor; get ye gone!' and thereat he shuts to the door and makes us stand without in the snow and the rain, cold and a-hungered till nightfall. If therewithal we patiently endure such wrong and such cruelty and such rebuffs without being disquieted, and without murmuring against him,

and with humbleness and charity bethink us tha this porter knows us full well, and that God make him to speak against us, O Brother Leo, write tha herein is perfect joy. And if we be instant i knocking and he come out full wrath and driv us away as importunate knaves, with insults an buffetings, saying : 'Get ye gone hence, vilest o thieves ; begone to the almshouse, for here y shall find neither food nor lodging' ; if we suffe this with patience and with gladness and wit love, O Brother Leo, write that herein is perfec joy. And if we, still constrained by hunger, col and night, knock yet again and shout and wit much weeping pray him for the love of God tha he will but open and let us in, and he, yet mor enraged, should say : 'These be importunat knaves ; I will pay them well as they deserve, and should rush out with a knotty stick, and tak ing us by the hand, throw us upon the groun and send us rolling in the snow, and beat us wit all the knots of that stick ; if with patience an with gladness we suffer all these things, thinkin on the pains of the Blessed Christ, the which w ought to suffer for the love of Him, O Brothe Leo, write that here and herein is perfect joy then hear the conclusion of the whole matte Brother Leo ; above all graces and gifts of th Holy Spirit, that Christ granteth to His Beloved is to overcome oneself, and willingly for the lov of Christ endure pains and insults and sham and want, inasmuch as in all other gifts of God w may not glory, sith they are not ours but God's whence says the Apostle : 'What hast thou tha thou hast not received of God? And if tho hast received it of Him, wherefore boastest tho thyself, as if thou hadst it of thyself?' But i

the cross of tribulation and affliction we may boast: sith this is ours; and therefore saith the Apostle, 'I will not that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"*

Here we have a beautiful living presentment of the "*ama nesciri et pro nihilo computari*" of à Kempis; and, as we read, we ask ourselves: is this the extravagance of a poet, such as St Francis certainly was, or is it the translation into personal sentiment of a true spiritual principle and doctrine, one that should bear its part in the life of every soul, though exemplified in a higher manner in the lives of such men as Francis? And, as we ask ourselves this question, we think, with some depression and weariness, of the teeming volumes of ascetical writings in which this same theme has been repeated, not with variations, but with monotonous persistency, in which we have been told to care nothing for the opinions of men—to prefer contempt to honour, misunderstanding to appreciation. Worst of all, they not only propose their maxim that we may put it into action, but they likewise endeavour to justify it to our judgement, and the school of Zeno is called in to prove that words are breath, and that the fleeting opinions of men are not worthy the consideration of a self-respecting mind; all with about as much success as our foolish attempts to console a child for its broken toy by the assurance that it will break still more elaborate toys and grieve still more bitterly at some future date.

Little some of our teachers reflect what results would ensue were we, in reality, to accept some of their unqualified statements uncorrected by

* *Little Flowers of St Francis;* translation of T. W. Arnold.

our native good sense, and by other doctrines which they propose in the same breath, not heeding their apparently fundamental contradiction with one another. For, as we are vaguely told to despise our own reputation, so we are also urged *ad nauseam* to the giving of edification and good example. How are we to reconcile these two things—to seek at once contempt and leadership? We cannot cast aside a fundamental instinct, and yet have it ready for use as soon as occasion calls.

One would be tempted to recoil from the entire doctrine and rank it as a mere extravagance, did not wiser reflection tell us that any teaching so universally inculcated must have good foundation in the needs of the soul, however much it may have been falsified and exaggerated in its presentment. Nor need we fear to probe, and think that because our first superficial conception was a false one there lies nothing true beneath. One of the many demands we have to make on faith is to guide us in our transition from the first skin-deep understanding of a doctrine to its more full and living sense. In many cases the falsehood arises from ascribing an independent value to that which has only a relative one, to the making of the means into an end. The first effect on our minds of this discovery is an inclination to cast aside and entirely abandon what we had unduly esteemed. But nothing could be more unwise than such a conclusion, and nothing more unjust than to avenge our subjective illusion on the truth itself. And our action would be the more foolish since it is always proved in the end that anything taken in its true proportion is also taken in its highest proportion, and that it is the

greater for not being great in itself but a stepping stone to something beyond.

Let us contrast then this instinct of the care for good name and reputation with another fundamental instinct, that, viz., of the preservation of life itself, and see what the comparison will teach us.

That everything connected with the preservation and propagation of life should be based on strong natural instincts may be said, piously, to be a disposition of Divine Providence in its care for the race. But such a manner of viewing the question is rather misleading, if we take it to signify that God has put these instincts around us as additional safeguards. They are, in fact, not something added to the gift of life, but an essential part of it; and, when represented to us as some particular gift, for which we are to be grateful, it arouses some of that sense of unreality which we feel when told to give special thanks for having air to breathe ; it is simpler and more rational to give thanks straightway for being alive at all, since air is its necessary condition.

Were the law of self-preservation based on a commandment and not on a natural instinct, the race would probably not survive so very long. Supposing, for instance, that, apart from the revealed will of God, we were all as ready to walk over a precipice as to skirt it; to fall into the jaws of a wild beast as to fly from it, men would die by thousands through sheer indifference, and pulpit fulminations would avail but little to check them. When we see how little a commandment avails to regulate another strong instinct, we may judge how little it would also suffice to take the place of this one. Thus it is not only merciful

but necessary that the laws which God has made in behalf of nature should correspond with the fundamental constitution of nature herself.

Now reputation is our life in the minds of others, and is based on an instinct almost as strong as that of self-preservation itself. Indeed, though not so primary, being proper to man not as mere animal, but as evolved to some kind of social perfection, however rudimentary, it becomes often, in the end, even stronger and more prevailing than the other, so that men would passionately prefer to die rather than be dishonoured in the eyes of their fellow men.

Let us endeavour to conceive life without it, and to suppose for a moment a race of human beings who were by nature simply indifferent to the opinion of one another. They would be bestial and disgusting, undignified and cruel. Add even a commandment of God to make them respect the wishes of their fellows: how far would this reach, and of what effect would it really be?

We have to take it then that this care for reputation is the very counterpart of the instinct of self-preservation, and is as necessary in the social as the former in the natural order. Just as the law of God, added to the instinct, forbids us to wilfully maim or destroy the physical life He has bestowed on us, so also it denies us the right to become pestilential and suicidal in the social order.

And let us remember that in this matter we are not acting on our own behalf alone. Even could we legitimately sacrifice our private rights and feelings, we have to consider those of others besides. For a man is affected not only by our opinion of him, but also by his opinion of us;

and it would be as unfair to crowd his mental hall with hideous, deformed statues, and call them our image and likeness, as to put up caricatures of a neighbour in our drawing room, labelled with his name and address. There is a community of interests in the matter, a real gain in seeing the goodness of others, a real loss in seeing only their defects.

We are, many of us, subject to black, cynical moods, wherein we take a grim morbid delight in putting forward our very worst side, and displaying it even to those we love the most. Although this disposition is partly based on a rugged love of truth, and a desire to conceal nothing that is worst within us, is it not also, at least to some extent, an outbreak of that savagery which lies hidden always in some dark corner of our nature, emerging, thank God, less and less as we grow in Christianity and civilization, but never wholly exterminated? It is that same cruel element which, were we naked savages, would make us seize the tomahawk and rush out to terrify our enemies.

In proportion as man advances in social culture, this strange impulse, which may be a survival of days when it was more important to be feared than to be loved, which may again be, in part, a fierce assertion of personal freedom and independence, but which also has in it surely some of the passion of cruelty itself, drops off with other uncouth companions, and gives way to the love of honour and good name.

Regarding then this care for the opinion and respect of others as a deeply implanted instinct of our social nature, the question at once arises: "What right has any ascetical doctrine, any

religious practice, to fly in the face of a fundamental law of our being?" The answer must obviously be that it has no right, and that any interpretation of a counsel of perfection involving such consequences must be deliberately judged false and pernicious, and amended in favour of a solution which will not falsify nature, however jealously it may guard the rights of grace.

This life of ours in the mind of others is to be preserved, and not only preserved, but nourished and developed like the life of body and soul. Any application of spiritual teaching on the sacrifice of reputation must be judged according to this previously established natural law; any development of it that went athwart this recognized truth would be false and condemnable. But it is a far cry from the recognition of this fact to the ruthless rejection of all that has been said, taught, and done in the matter. Were the instinct of human respect always on the side of truth and right, did it lead uniformly to the good of self and the neighbour, then all interference with its development would be rightly regarded as unwarranted and unjustifiable. But we see, on the contrary, that, like its fellow instinct, it needs to be controlled in the interests of something higher and better. Has the impulse of self-preservation never led a man to crush out another life for the protection of his own? to prevent a second from clambering on to the raft which only offers safety to one? Has not the soldier to sacrifice this instinct in the interests of his country? the mother for the sake of her child? Nay, do we not see that just the best and highest are often willingly sacrificed in the interests of the lower and less? For if it is

better to give than to receive, so it is often, though not always, the better that give, the worse that receive. And do we not behold the strong worn out in ministering to the weak, the wise to the foolish, the loving to the unlovable?

> All's lend-and-borrow,
> Good, see, wants evil,
> Joy demands sorrow,
> Angel weds devil! *

If then the primary instinct of life and happiness be thus frequently sacrificed in the interests of a higher life, why not also its secondary, social counterpart? If in the first case the lawful love of self be called on to yield to the love of the neighbour, may not the same demand be made in the second case, for similar reasons and for others likewise?

We are not asked to sacrifice life gratuitously, but only in a higher cause, or as the price of the life of another. And so far from this question being settled on what might be called business principles, it is rather the very opposite maxims that prevail. In a shipwreck the helpless have the first right: nay, the maimed, the useless, the sick, the foolish, will be, according to all recognized principles of the higher civilization, put into boats and saved before their betters. What should we think of a man who, because he knew he carried within him gifts higher and rarer than those of his neighbours, should assume to himself the first right to live, and sacrifice the weaker to his own salvation? To *be* more is recognized as bearing with it the obligation to *do* more; to *have* more is a call to *give* more. Commercial

* *Pisgah Sights.* R. Browning.

doctrines are out of place in such a crisis, and if a nugget of gold has to be thrown overboard to make room for a barrel of water, it may be tragic but it is also right. A special good may have to be sacrificed, a mission and a message lost; but if the messenger were to preserve his life at the cost of a greater law, he might find that the letter he bore had been lost in his struggles, and that all that remained to him was the life of which he had taken too much care. The law of God is not to save our neighbour, but to love him; perchance we shall find eventually that the latter comprised the first.

And now turning to that second life in the minds and hearts of our fellow-men, here again is a treasure that is not to be vainly cast away. The work of perfection and of divine charity is the hewing out of the image of God within us; the work of the love of man has a double end, what we do for them in ourselves, what we do for ourselves in them. As God has transferred many of his own claims to our fellow-creatures, we find ourselves under the obligation of producing their images, as well as His own, in the gallery of our souls, and, conversely, of helping them in the production of ours. Obligations of this kind are necessarily mutual. And separateness is even more impossible and condemnable in the care of this second life than in that of the first, since it is begotten by the joint efforts of ourselves and our neighbour. Therefore we have to adjust the conflicting claims of self-love and altruism, and to allow to our fellow-beings a lawful liberty in the work which is theirs as much as our own. It is here that selfishness and pride are apt to break in, leading to a consequent

struggle for domination. We try to transfer to the mind of another, in all its completeness, that image we have formed in our own imagination of our own selves. We should think it an outrage to refined feeling and taste to force anyone to pay us grudging and unwilling compliments; but what we would not ask of them in speech we endeavour to compel from them in thought by overruling their judgement in the interests of our own vanity. And the success that too often attends our efforts is far more detrimental to ourselves than to our victims. For, having fastened our self-illusions on the mind of another, we proceed, most inconsequently but also most unavoidably, to take, as though from another, the doctrine we have ourselves fashioned; and, having perverted another to our own false opinion, we accept it as though it had an independent origin, and we appeal to the bastard child for proof of the respectability of its parent. Thus we foist a lie on our brother, and it avenges itself not on him, but on ourselves.

The knowledge which others possess of us is often poor and defective, but it is, nevertheless, a grave mistake to estimate its value by mere comparison with our knowledge of ourselves. Hypnotism has revealed, amongst other strange things, the remarkable fact that there are actually strata of memory and feeling which, though out of reach of our own consciousness, can be got at by the mind of another. And the same is true of personality and character. Just as we know we need certain companionship to call forth certain powers, that with some we are at our best, with others at our worst, so also as regards self-knowledge. In so far as, confounding isolation

with independence, we fence ourselves round with the barrier of self-esteem, so far do we also cut off the supply of semi-creative force which flows to us from those with whom we are in spiritual contact. In our anxiety to prove that we are what we are, we lose the chance of becoming all that we might be. We coerce our neighbour in a false endeavour to preserve our own liberty, and we sacrifice a fuller and truer self-presentment to one that we prefer for the sole reason that we made it ourselves.

There have been tragic examples of lives wasted because the owners would risk nothing for dread of failure. There have been men who would not trust lest they should be deceived, who would not love lest they should be disappointed.

"Combien ne suis-je pas vulnérable?" exclaims the melancholy Amiel. "Si j'étais père, quelle foule de chagrins ne pourrait pas me faire un enfant. Époux, j'aurais mille façons de souffrir, parcequ'il y a mille conditions à mon bonheur. . . . Une compagne de ma vie, de mes travaux, de mes pensées et de mes éspèrances; un culte de famille, la bienfaisance au dehors. . . . toutes ces images m'enivrent souvent. Mais je les écarte, parceque chaque éspèrance est un œuf d'où peut sortir un serpent au lieu d'une colombe. . . .

"L'ironie a de bonne heure atteint mon enfance, et pour n'être pas vaincue par la destinée, ma nature s'est, je crois, armée d'une circonspection de force à n'être surprise par aucune câlinerie. Cette force fait ma faiblesse. J'ai horreur d'être dupe, surtout dupe de moi-même, et je me prive de tout pour ne pas me tromper ni être

trompé; donc l'humiliation est le chagrin que je redoute encore le plus, et par conséquent l'orgueil serait le plus profond de mes vices." *

And so Amiel stayed at home to avoid a wound, and closed his windows to save himself from cold; but his own words reveal whether the system brought him joy or sorrow, whether he even succeeded in his unambitious effort. He might have learnt, from the old fairy tale, that the dangers which are not allowed to come near the castle gate are found at length within its precincts, and that the stab so long averted comes at last, and leaves its victim the more prostrate in proportion to previous immunity. The princess has not faced the risks of life, and, when misfortune falls on her, she remains locked in the sleep of death, more helpless by reason of her former false independence, and now only to be awaked from her insensibility by the free bestowal of another's love.

And as we cut ourselves off from a fuller life by this method of procedure, so likewise we deprive others of the help they ought to get from us. Just as the director who aims at fashioning the soul of another according to his own preconceived pattern is bound to run counter to its true development to a greater or less degree, so when we force others to think of us, not according to their own convictions but ours, we hinder and check their growth in so far as we might have served thereto. Whether as example, or as warning, or as light, or as strength, or as an obstacle, we should have been of use to them had we been willing to serve—had we allowed our life to pass into theirs. But the portrait we have fastened

* "Fragments d'un journal intime."

on them is not of their own producing, and will therefore affect them as little as the flattering photograph we bestow on our friends. The grain of wheat would not consent to be ground in the mill of criticism, and it cannot therefore be transformed into bread, whether for ourselves or for others.

And thus we see that the true understanding of this important ascetical doctrine is based, not on gratuitous contempt for the feelings, opinions, and affections of our fellow-men, but on a true reverence for the autonomy of other minds, and on our recognition of our position as members of one family. As a modern French writer * says of the one who is truly Catholic in mind and heart:

"Non seulement, par conséquent, il ne détruit pas sa personnalité pour ne pas la dresser contre les autres, mais il la constitue en s'enrichissant de Dieu et des autres et en les enrichissant de lui, par cette pénétration et cette vivification mutuelles qui font que le multiple, tout en restant multiple, devient un."

Putting aside all mere supernatural motives, how far more lasting would be mere human friendship if based on such principles—if we were truly ready to take life as well as affection from the one we love—to be *made* by them, in a certain measure, as well as recognized and appreciated.

And so, if the words of St Francis seem somewhat extravagant, let us understand them as we understand his rhapsodies in favour of his "Lady and Mistress," Poverty. We will not

* Abbé Laberthonnière.

laud the acrobatic feats of Brother Juniper as though they were types of perfect development and grace, but we will acknowledge that an extreme example of humility and selflessness does not come altogether amiss in a world where the contrary so generally prevails.

IX

Spiritual Ennui

THERE is a moment in many lives, and a moment which may occur more than once, when, having tasted of what the world can give, the sense of satiety supervenes, and, under the stress of weariness and disillusion, the soul cries out that all is vanity and affliction of spirit; that the fruit which looked so fair is nought but dust and bitterness.

Too eagerly, and far too hastily, the words are caught up by moralists and used to demonstrate the hollowness of earthly and fleshly joys, while the Christian ascetic goes on to prove therefrom that God alone can satisfy the heart and mind. If, they tell us, the result of our reflections on life is a certain disappointment and sadness, this is because we have sought for happiness where it is not to be found, because we have hunted for diamonds in a dust heap, and eaten ashes instead of bread.

But before their sermon is well ended there comes an interruption from the opposite side, and out of the mouth of the man who has served God from his youth upwards the same cry arises. The argument of the moralists would be unanswerable were all the disappointed ones, as they appear sometimes to assume, in the ranks of those who sought their happiness in mere earthly

pleasure. But the confession of disappointment breaks forth from other hearts likewise, and sometimes more loudly from the believer than the atheist, from the saint than the sinner. What is our Christian teacher to answer to this? How is he to cure those who are weary and disenchanted, though they have *not* sought vanity nor chased shadows? From monasteries as well as palaces, from the desert and the town, the same lamentation has, time out of mind, gone forth, not only from those unfaithful to their call, but from the chaste and the mortified as from the sensual and worldly. What are we to say if the sense of hollowness invades the pious as well as the worldly? and if the man who has devoted his life to God and truth has also his moods and moments in which that service appears a hollow and disappointing one?

The fact is that there are two ways in which we can be disappointed; first, when what we took to be food proves (in the eating of it) mere ashes; and secondly, when the food, which itself is sweet, tastes bitter in the mouth. As a great German philosopher has said, there is a moment when a spiritual reality seems to fail and fall short because the mind of the thinker is weary: he has reached his own limit, and can, for the time, go no further. And this can befall us in things both material and spiritual, in things of time and in things of eternity. Eternal truth cannot be, of itself, disappointing, but the mind, having reached its own limit, thinks it has reached likewise the limit of what it contemplates, and, too tired to go further, is tempted to regret the way it has come.

In the life of the senses such a state has

its parallel; it is not only the fault of the object that the appetite is cloyed, but it is the appetite itself which has grown weak from surfeit. The disappointment here is more entire and irremediable, since life and enjoyment are directly dependent on the physical faculties in this latter case, and only indirectly in the former. But the fault still lies in the weariness and weakness of the subject rather than in the illusive nature of the object, and it is from a false instinct of self-justification that we are inclined to put down to deception that which is really the result of fatigue. We think the world is vain and tedious because we are too exhausted to enjoy it; and we feel disgusted with truth and religion because our mind is weary, along with the body on which it depends.

And as the realities of one world grow dim those of another become proportionately living and vivid. Each man looks over into his neighbour's garden and thinks it fairer than his own. Therein lies a world of which he has not yet tasted, whose realities are visible and whose deceptions are yet hidden. Or, to put it more truly, it is the harmonies of another sphere which are, for the first time, breaking on his ear at a moment when he has grown deaf from use and monotony to the music of that in which he lives. Thus the man of mind will envy the man of the senses, and the man of the senses the man of mind; the married will envy the single and the single the married; the secular will envy the religious and the religigious the secular. This is desolation, whether it be found in the soul of the saint or the profligate. It is weariness, satiety, ennui; a sense of empti-

ness even in the midst of possession, of inability to grasp what is actually in our hands, to see what is before our eyes, to taste what is on our lips. The trees are still green and the sky is yet blue; we know it, but we can no longer feel it. And so the sensualist cries out on the deceptiveness of the outer world, with those apparent joys which he can no longer taste; but he knows in his heart that, were his faculties only revivified, that same world would possess for him all its former charm.

There is, indeed, a disappointment with earthly pleasure which arises from a sense of the deeper underlying reality which it conceals; the body has, in a sense, revealed the soul, and wakened longings which itself cannot satisfy.

> O, if the pleasures I have known in thee,
> But my poor faith's poor first-fruits be,
> What quintessential, keen, ethereal bliss
> Then shall be his
> Who has thy birth-time's consecrating dew
> For death's sweet chrism retained,
> Quick, tender, virginal and unprofaned! *

This longing for the something that lies beyond, these aspirations for more than this life can afford, may, indeed, arise in the soul of the prodigal that is touched by grace. Comparing his bestial enjoyments with those higher goods which he once possessed, they become to him indeed but as the husks of swine; and he realizes at length that when one thing is lacking all else is likewise at fault. But this state is not to be confounded with the weariness above described, which consists, not in an apprehension of higher realities, but in a dulness resulting from fatigue.

* *To the Body.* C. Patmore.

In the Wise Man these two elements are conjoined; he is subjectively weary, and objectively disappointed. He has gauged the world's capacity for the giving of joy, and found its pretensions unverified, but he too is tired and worn out; that which formerly delighted him can please him no longer.

In Omar Khayyam, on the contrary, we miss this note of personal weariness. His capacities are unblunted and entire; his quarrel is not with nature, but with God as he understands Him. The extraordinary fascination which he exercises, even on those whose lives are by no means cast in his mould, arises perhaps from this keenness of perception and enjoyment even while he knows that neither he nor the world can last. He has gripped and grasped the best that the world of sense can offer, and, though well aware that its joys are fleeting and transitory, he has, at least, no cause for disappointment in the weakness or weariness of his own sensations. It is indeed through the very intensity of his apprehension that he divines here and there the eternal through its earthly veil;

> And this I know; whether the one true light
> Kindle to love, or wrath consume me quite,
> One glimpse of it within the tavern caught
> Better than in the temple lost outright.

He and nature have joined hands to make the best of one another; neither is sick of the bargain, but both are sore and angry with a scheme of things which makes their enjoyment so brief and chequered;

> Ah! Love, could you and I with fate conspire
> To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
> Would not we shatter it to bits, and then
> Remould it nearer to the heart's desire?

Moralists are apt to confound this objective and subjective disillusion: the former based on the inadequate nature of the thing coveted and possessed, the latter on that personal weariness and ennui which makes us to be as though we had not that which we have. In the former is a lesson, truly and properly applicable to the worldling, of the vanity of mere earthly delights to a being capable of higher things; in the latter is a sad but inevitable experience, proper to life as such, and which all must share alike, whatever be the object and end of their search.

Nor let us be too much alarmed if saint and sinner seem thus to pass through somewhat the same experience. "The earth," too, "is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof"; as the spiritual world is not proved an illusion because, for a time, its gates are closed, so neither is the beautiful world around us a deception because we can no longer enjoy it. The laws of consolation and desolation, applied ordinarily to the supernatural world alone, do indeed cast light on the natural world also. This too has its periods of blindness alternating with perception, of dulness alternating with intensity. In every form of earthly existence we are still compounded of body and soul, and the limits of the former are a continual source of oppression to the latter.

It is not then the mere sense of disappointment, experienced by the worldly, which will furnish a proof of the higher value of the spiritual life. Rather would it be an argument for the most ignoble of existences, founded on the ninth beatitude of those who are never disappointed because they never expect. And such are those who live on the mere surface of life,

and whose limited success corresponds to their equally limited ambition. But there is another and a deeper meaning to this cry of the stricken soul. Does it not signify, from whatever quarter it may arise, that life in this world is not equal to its own fulfilment; that even the poorest and most fleeting joys are only joys at all so long as they convey with them some sense of eternity; and that the disappointment of those who have sought a spiritual ideal is not because they have started on the wrong road, but because they are weary before they can reach the end of it?

Modern psychology is laying stress on a fact, always dimly recognized, of the existence of a subconscious life, of which only a small fraction can emerge fitfully to the conscious surface. To use a somewhat clumsy simile, this subconscious life increases by cubic feet, while the conscious life can only multiply by square feet. Hence the fuller and richer the undergrowth the more inadequate its outer representation. The man who truly *lives* becomes daily more and more aware how little his conscious thoughts and feelings can accord with his truer and deeper self; his inner life is too full for the conditions of outer existence, and the divorce between the two gives that sense of unreality which is the most bitter of all experiences. Hence the cry that all is vanity and affliction of spirit: a cry strong, often, in proportion to the spiritual efforts that have preceded it. "He is not here, He is risen," was the answer to the seekers at the sepulchre; "It is not here, it is buried," might be the answer to those who would find the eternal on the surface of their conscious life rather than in its hidden depths. It is not the object that is lacking, but

the power to see and to apprehend. If God alone can satisfy the desire of the heart, so He alone can enable the heart to desire Him; He must look through our eyes that we may see Himself.

Disappointment, whether in the life of nature or in that of the spirit, truly consists in the withdrawal or concealment of the eternal element, and, in a measure, of God Himself. We are suddenly brought face to face with our own limitations, and realize our utter poverty and abandonment. We cry out on the insufficiency of outer objects, but we ourselves are at least as much in fault. Our present blindness makes us unjust to our past perceptions, and, because the sun has set, we believe that it never shone. But now it is that the difference will most clearly appear between a life that is guided by faith in distant and spiritual realities, and that which follows the mere dicta of immediate and superficial experience. To the former its God is hidden, to the latter He is lost; to the former it is a time of desolation, dark indeed but transitory; to the latter it is a moment of complete dreariness and disillusion. Let us take an example of the latter condition from a writer who has only too faithfully described it.

"That peculiar state of misery," writes Mr T. Hardy, of the feelings of his heroine, "which is not exactly grief, and which especially attends the dawning of reason in the latter days of an ill-judged, transient love. To be conscious that the end of the dream is approaching, and yet has not absolutely come, is one of the most wearisome, as well as the most curious stages between the beginning of passion and its end." *

* *The Return of the Native.* T. Hardy.

Contrast with this the following passage from Coventry Patmore: "At least once in a lifetime, and by some hitherto unexplained awakening of full attention for a little while, what man but has seen a woman, and what woman a man, before whom all their previous ideals have paled; and if, by subsequent nearness, they get within the eye's focus and the vision is dimmed, that is the fault of the eyes, and no discredit to the reality of the thing seen, as is proved by the way in which death restores the focus, and with it the vision. Attention, however, as multitudes have confessed with fruitless tears, would have adapted the focus of the eye to the nearness of the object, and made it more, not less, lovely by closer inspection." *

Unless the sentiment of this latter writer be true there is, in this wide world of men and women, hardly any ground for a lasting love, for into every affection may creep, from time to time, that sense of disillusion. No one is so lovable as to be in no sense unlovely; no one is so loving as to be at no times cold and loveless. And yet is it not a suicidal proceeding to judge our times of life by our periods of lifelessness? and to measure objects of sight when the darkness has supervened? It is not in our moments of disillusion that true illumination is to be found, but rather in the preceding period, which we now regard as a season of deceit and infatuation. Many a middle-aged man, grown prosperous and commonplace, looks back with contempt on what he calls the follies of youth, those enthusiasms for an ideal now dead, those friendships for beings since regarded as worth-

* *Religio Poetae.* C. Patmore.

less and imperfect. And yet those follies were, in fact, the very zenith of his spiritual perceptions; they were rents torn by the eager soul in the veil of eternity, which closed all too soon, and left the man in a realm of common-sense and commonness, divorced from the deeper secrets of his own nature. If there is a sense in which no human being is deserving of a lasting and immortal attachment, there is also another and a truer sense in which we all deserve it; and it is by personal friendship and love that we find the way both to get it and to give it. But once we have entered into eternal relations with the finite, as with the infinite, we must be prepared for those vicissitudes of light and darkness which are a necessary consequence of our divided nature.

"*Tu solus sanctus! Tu solus altissimus!*" How hard and dry and false those words sound in the first glow of youthful perception, when all the world and every creature in it is in its first fresh green and glory! But how bitter again do they sound in their very truth when the lesson of life has, for the time, exhausted our powers of perception, and it is only too patent that God alone is holy and great, while, at the same time, it is equally patent that He is a very long way off. As at first the words sounded cruelly false, so now they sound cruelly true, but true in a sense that was not intended. If first we cared for the world too much, so now there is danger that we may care for it too little. Now it is that we must pass forward to the more complete synthesis, in which we find that God alone is truly good and beautiful, but that His beauty and His glory are to be found in the meanest thing that blows, and that, from a certain point of view,

our love for no creature can be excessive. Having thus reached faith in God through our faith in man, we come back to have faith in man through our faith in God; and we are prepared to meet our periods of desolation without losing our belief in love, whether human or divine. We have learned our lesson, not of futility but of weakness, and we have reached the limits of knowledge but not those of faith.

X

Not Peace but the Sword

THERE is a fountain in Paris which is powerfully suggestive of a great problem of life. Supreme at the summit we behold a calm impassive Michael, with his foot on the prostrate form of a magnificent Lucifer—such a Lucifer as our English poet has conceived—who writhes in impotent resistance beneath his victorious foe. The waters dash around and about the two figures, giving to the whole that sense of storm and movement which the stone-carving alone could not have conveyed. In the strong, indomitable face of the fiend we have passion, checked and thwarted, but not subdued; in the expressionless countenance of the angel we have bloodless purity and unopposed virtue, justice without pity, and strength without frailty. We cannot forbear from thinking, as we gaze upon the two contending figures, that the masterful, rebellious creature, struggling under the foot of that gently unmerciful spirit, is essentially nobler than his conqueror; that Michael has the strength of the untempted, and gains the victory by the might of another arm, not by the predominance of his own spiritual force over that of his antagonist; while Satan, on the contrary, is wrecked by his passionate determination and unbridled individuality: his damnation is his

own, which is more than can be said for the triumph of Michael.

Let us hasten to say that this beautiful monument is not also a compendium of theology; that because the artist has thus depicted the struggle, with its issue, it does not therefrom follow that the two conflicting spirits are such as he has drawn them. But the very fulness of his imagination, as shown forth in his representation of Lucifer, compared with its poverty in that of Michael, is highly suggestive and instructive, manifesting, as it does, the helplessness of human art when it would endeavour to depict a perfectly innocent and sinless hero. To our seething, tumultuous humanity, the being without faults is also the being without quality or colour; so soon as we strive to represent spotless holiness and entire perfection we lapse inevitably into a sense of inactivity and lifelessness. It would seem then that the sinless and saintly can never be to us an object of art save as blended with suffering, or struggle, or weakness.

Modern philosophy appears to confirm this view by its teaching that true life consists in ceaseless activity, whence it follows that struggle and combat, stress and opposition, are the necessary factors by which it is fostered and developed.

But how does all this agree with what our spiritual masters tell us of the desirability of *peace*, which is, they say, the rightful inheritance of the man of good will? Are we not taught to believe that disturbance is an evil and impediment to him who is serving God, a good and grace only to those who, being on the wrong path, are fortunate when they are made aware of the fact, that sorrow and trouble of mind

were a blessing to the prodigal son, a curse to his brother?

"My glory I will give to no man," quotes St Bernard in one of the most beautiful of his homilies. "What then, O Lord, wilt Thou give to us? 'My peace,' He says, 'I give you, My peace I leave you.' Enough for me, O Lord; I gratefully receive what Thou leavest, and leave what Thou keepest . . . . peace I ask, peace I desire, and nothing more."

St Ignatius, in his masterly rules for self-guidance, inculcates the same lesson when he teaches that, with those who go from bad to worse, it is the part of the good angel to produce a sense of trouble and unrest, while the same spirit will labour to preserve rest and peace in the hearts of those who are labouring steadily to advance in the service of God.

All this doctrine would seem adverse to the dicta of modern philosophy, and yet is it not equally difficult to harmonize with many other Gospel words which, at first sight, bear a directly contrary import? For Christ tells us that He came to bring "not peace but the sword"; a sword of separation that should penetrate, not only to the closest human relationships, but to the innermost parts of the soul itself, making division and opposition where there had been union and quiet.

It may be urged that Christ spoke thus to those whom He was calling from the world to God, from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of heaven; to those who had to subdue flesh and spirit and to pass through the valley of death before they could win to the land of peace and rest. They were in the position of those to whom

St Ignatius applies his first code, of those namely who, if not actually sinners, are at least worldly and indifferent. But this explanation will hardly serve. Every word of God is eternal and continuous. If Christ said "come" occasionally to strangers in the street and market-place, He said it daily and hourly to those who were in close communion with Him. Are we so sure that it is less disturbing to move from good to better than from bad to good? Is the slow tedious conversion of the immoral man so certainly more painful than the passing from light to darkness, and from darkness again to light, in which the innermost lives of the saints would appear to consist?

In the early days of Christianity there was not the pronounced distinction, with which we are familiar, between the work of salvation and that of sanctification; the "saints" were those who, however feebly and uncertainly, took the path that led to heaven and not to hell; and the same use of the term is apt to recur in periods of religious revival. To aim at partial sanctification is, in a sense, as contradictory as to aim at partial salvation; the tendency must be whole and entire, however much the execution may lag behind. So long then as something remains to be done—and something assuredly does remain so long as the soul is living and the body not too decayed to serve as its instrument—there is the possibility of opposition, with consequent struggle and disquiet, nor is the saint likely to be freer in this respect than the newly converted sinner; nay, rather less so, in proportion as he is more alive to the breath of every spiritual influence, whether good or evil.

The peace then of which the saints speak, as

a boon to be rightly desired and surely obtained by the true servants of God, cannot signify exemption from spiritual disturbance, for this were to seek quiet at the expense of spiritual progress, and stillness at the expense of life. It must rather consist in a certain patience and endurance, which abide throughout the storm, and maintain the soul in its constancy and confidence, however much it may be ruffled and shaken by the storms of doubt and temptation.

Consolation and desolation, states as well known in the natural life of heart and mind as in the more strictly spiritual life, signify, not the one happiness and the other suffering, nor the one peace and the other trouble, but rather the opposite conditions of realization and dulness, keeness of sensation and anæsthesia. To be desolate is to be, in the spiritual meaning, blind and deaf, without taste or smell or touch. To be consoled, on the contrary, signifies to be, in the highest sense, *alive*, to feel quickly and intensely all that is to be felt, whether the sensation be one of pain or pleasure. The anæsthetic patient is as indifferent to cold as to warmth, as immune from suffering as he is from joy. So, in our spiritual existence, as in our higher life of thought and affection, to be desolate means to be numb and insensible to those realities that can bring us either joy or sorrow, but can never leave us wholly indifferent. Hence the cry of the saints, "To suffer or to die"; hence also the thirst of the human lover for suffering and sacrifice; not because pain is better than joy, but because life is better than death and feeling than senselessness. What the heart of the lover dreads, whether his love be for God or for man, is separation and insensibility: that numbness

that isolates him from the life of humanity and the life of God, that makes him dead to others, and others, as it were, dead to him. Better and best of all is the intensity of joy; but, if that may not be had, then would he desire as next best the intensity of pain.

Here then is the secret of our irresistible sympathy with a passionate, struggling, rebellious fiend rather than with an impassive, pitiless angel. There is a sense in which we may say, "I suffer, therefore I am," because we are alive in so far as we are open to impressions from all that lies around us. And because this life is essentially tragic, because to reach the highest we must tear ourselves from the lowest, because the best is also that which is least visible and tangible, because the body grows sick and weary from the exertions of the soul, we learn to identify fulness of life with keenness of suffering. We cannot see God's face and live; so neither can we feel the presence of any spiritual reality without a corresponding sense of our own misery, weakness and futility; without a chafing realization of the oppressive limits of time and space and law; without a consciousness of the transitory and fitful nature of all spiritual impressions in this narrow existence. And thus to be most truly alive is also to be most truly in pain.

But if we thus seem to understand the fallen Lucifer better on earth, may we not hope to understand Michael better in heaven? Not such a Michael as our artist has depicted, for joy and final victory can never be realized or pictured by beings who are only truly alive in the midst of suffering and perplexity. But not for this must we forget that it is, nevertheless, life through pain and not pain itself which is the true object

of all our striving; that suffering is not good for its own sake, but only as the road that leads to a kingdom. What we desire is life, and life in all its abundance, an aim better realized in our few short moments of intense joy than in our more frequent and longer periods of keen suffering. That very sense of loneliness, which is one of the bitterest impressions of pain, surely points to the fact that perfect love will cast out sorrow.

"Looking up we see the same sun but not the same clouds"—it is in joy, not in sorrow, that the completest union is attained. We have known this, though only for brief instants, in our actual existence; moments in which we taste the food of eternity even while the sword of change and separation hangs over us. The true and final state at which we aim is that in which love and life are identical, in which we are all there and others with us, and no part of us outside. We are more real when we grieve than when we are callous and indifferent, but we are most real of all when we rejoice; for then it is that we not only see the highest and strain towards it, but possess it and live in it.

"Not peace but the sword"; that is to say, not such peace as would consist in a sense of finality and completeness unsuited to the conditions under which we now live, but, "My peace I give you, My peace I leave you," that is a peace buttressed by hope, and forming, as it were, the bridge between our periods of sorrow and joy; a bridge which we can cross to and fro occasionally in this life, but over which we shall pass finally, never to return, when we exchange the fulness of sorrow for the fulness of joy, and find our highest life in our greatest happiness.

XI

Self-Will and Freedom

ROUSSEAU has said that "all men are born free"; but any assertion at first hearing more absurd and contradictory it would be difficult to put forth. Few signs indeed are there of liberty, whether physical, intellectual or moral, at the stage of life to which we refer. It would seem truer to say that we are born in a state of utter dependence and subjection, through which we slowly, and somewhat ineffectually, struggle to some kind of personal freedom. For what is even our bodily dependence, which lessens with our physical growth, compared with that mental thraldom in which we necessarily find ourselves? Bonds, visible and invisible, wrought by inheritance, education and custom, weave around us a web as close as it is imperceptible, and entangle us the more for their very lightness and subtlety.

It is not then in a crude socialistic sense that this word can possess any truth; it must be referred rather to some fundamental tendency and disposition of nature, to some right which is independent of all outward or accidental circumstances. Man is born free in so far as there is in him something essentially self-determining and distinct from all outer influences; some power of thought and will and love which constitutes eminently his personal life, his own life, his life as a

being unique and distinct from all others. How slight and uninteresting freedom, explained in this sort, will appear to some of those who invoke it in social and religious disputes, and who busy themselves in creating external defences and props for a force whose very existence consists in independence of all such!

But if the freedom with which we are all born free is thus fundamental and inward, there is another kind of liberty, the real object of the above described efforts, which belongs rather to our outer relations with the world and other men, and which we can win, or lose, or increase according to the possibilities granted us by the society to which we belong. Regarded from this point of view liberty consists in "having our own way," in immunity from obligation and external pressure, and complete independence of action and conduct. More and more do all classes of society grow enamoured of this ideal, and resent all that savours of authority and compulsion.

Quite foreign and hostile to such an ideal is monasticism, with its advocacy of obedience and submission. Therein we see the definite presentment of what all mystical and ascetical writers have taught, or at least suggested. To be subject, to do the will of another rather than one's own, to dread the freedom of one's private impulses and inclinations: here is the golden rule of spiritual progress, here is the road to the highest religious development of which we are capable. On what subject has more been said and written, and that not only by Catholic ascetics but by the most solitary and independent spiritual thinkers? Nor is it only a matter of words. Entire lives are daily based on these

principles, and while the generality of the world, as we know it, is consciously or unconsciously struggling for perfect liberty and immunity from all obligation, a small residue is seeking how to renounce this which others regard as the supreme good. Nothing appears more deplorable to the ordinary man of the world than such an abandonment of that which he himself regards as the most sacred and inalienable of possessions, but equally are the others convinced that they have chosen the better part, the straight though the narrow way.

But if ascetical writers can find support for their doctrine in the Gospel, and in the teaching and experience of the saints, it unfortunately happens in this, as in so many cases, that they have not sufficiently defined the precise matter of dispute, and that consequently they could sometimes be overthrown by weapons snatched from their own armoury. For if they can multiply quotations from the highest authorities to show the value of obedience, so too could as much be drawn from the same quarters to prove the dignity and pricelessness of freedom. If the mystics have walked in the way of subjection, and have submitted to the yoke of authority, even to the risking of their mission and message to the world, they have also told us much of that deep loneliness of the soul, in its isolation from human contact, and surely in this very solitude there is a necessary and inevitable independence. And their lives have moreover shown that there is a point to which the law of obedience does not reach—that point where the soul joins her Creator, and can be touched and guided by Him alone. Nor has the Church failed

to recognize this essential privacy of the individual spirit, however much her ordinary discipline and government may appear at times to ignore it. When writers, like St John of the Cross and others, receive an acknowledged position in her calendar, we see how far she can go in the acceptance of this doctrine. And in the living examples with which we occasionally come in contact we see how those older and more exercised in the law of obedience are often just the ones who at last most fully recognize the essential rights of that true spiritual freedom which no man is called on to renounce.

"Lord," prayed St Augustine, "free those who call on Thee, and free, too, those who do not call on Thee, that they may call on Thee, and that Thou mayest make them free." In what does this freedom consist? Is it the same which is renounced by some and coveted by others? Or is each side considering a different object while calling it by the same name? Or is it that neither apprehends liberty in its true sense, and that it lies indeed beyond the renunciation of the one and the ambition of the other?

Whatever may be the reason of the misunderstanding, and whether it be one or all of those that we have mentioned, this much is certain, that the ascetic is wrong if his teaching lead to the oppression of liberty in the spiritual and intrinsic sense; and his opponent is wrong if, by his protestations that "all men are born free," he intends to claim for them a general right to do as they please, and ascribes to the material order of liberty those qualities which belong to the spiritual order alone. And both, on the con-

trary, are right, if the ascetic is speaking of self-will, and not essential liberty, and his antagonist of that same essential liberty, and not self-will.

But one point is too frequently overlooked by both sides, which is that, in either order, liberty is not so universally coveted as we may sometimes fondly suppose. Even in external matters we shall find countless daily examples of a desire for subjection, rather than freedom. There are some men—and more women—who positively crave for laws and regulations, by which every detail of their lives may be absorbed. And if they can thus gladly abdicate their possible liberty of action in the material order, how much more that deeply inward, spiritual freedom, the exercise of which demands far more courage than its renunciation!

For be it spoken and acknowledged, *free* action is, at long last, the most laborious action of which we are capable; and the lives of too many are spent, not in seeking, but in evading it. Our very occupations and duties become too often welcome chiefly as pastimes, i.e., as means of escape from personal initiative and endeavour. The frivolous round of a worldly life, the fierce hurry and bustle of a commercial career, are in this respect much akin to the rhythmical routine of conventual existence, when it comes to be liked for its hypnotic effect on the personal character.

How sadly true are Pascal's words:

"If man were happy he would be the more so the less he was diverted, like the saints and God. . . . The one thing which consoles us for our miseries is diversion; yet this itself is the greatest of our miseries. For this it is

which mainly hinders us from thinking of ourselves, and which insensibly destroys us. . . .

"Were our condition truly happy, we need not turn our minds from it in order to become happy. . . .

"We never seek things in themselves, but only the search for things."

We instinctively crave to be lifted and carried by something stronger than ourselves, to be delivered from the burden of choice and initiative, to have our mind subdued by an invisible conviction, and our will controlled by an inevitable course of action. And indeed the revolt that we experience against the law of subjection and obedience is often due rather to our desire for still greater subjection than to the longing for personal liberty. We want to be borne along and not to walk, and obedience sometimes demands that we shall choose the path of greater and not of less resistance. To obey the will of another, or to fulfil the requirements of a law, we need at times to rouse ourselves from the sleep of lethargy, and to breast the current instead of floating peacefully adown it.

There are minds that experience no intellectual difficulty until they come in contact with those of others, and then they never know rest again, because nothing is so hopelessly unanswerable as a problem not rooted in the mind which proposes it. These are the minds naturally submissive and subject, which are now borne along by the doubts of those around them as they were formerly carried by their faith. Personal doubts and difficulties, on the contrary, are developed rather in an atmosphere congenial to faith, by the struggle of the mind to overpass the limits

of its own first conceptions. Obedience follows somewhat the same law. There are persons who submit easily so long as they are not sensible of any stronger current in opposition to the ordinary authorities. But once the impulse is in a contrary direction, they grow restive and rebellious. Hence the truest obedience, like the strongest faith, is manifested in personal effort and initiative, an effort not dependent on outer opposition any more than on outer agreement, but producing itself in either. Personal faith grows strong in the overcoming of what is contrary, and strong in the assimilation of what is congenial; obedience, in like manner, is shown in true personal resistance to mere natural and deterministic pressure resulting in true personal subjection to an accepted authority.

"Do nothing against thy will," said Marcus Aurelius; and at first sight this maxim would appear completely contrary to the advice of à Kempis: "It is better to be under all than over one."

But the two views are not really so irreconcilable. There is a region of life which is common to each one of us and to all, in which we do the same things, in varying degrees but in fundamentally the same manner. It is here that self-will comes into conflict with self-will, that greed and ambition and selfishness hold their sway. And here it is that obedience opposes order and self control to the wild forces of personal impulse and passion, and enjoins a certain absolute, constant and unswerving line of conduct. There is a law of uniformity to which we must all submit if life in common is to be practicable. But the higher the civilization, the more carefully does it

protect the true personal rights, while subjecting the individual to a law in all that is common to him and others. We follow the general prescriptions in the public roads and streets; we follow our own taste in the arrangement of our domestic interior; the law protects our fortune, we determine our own use of it. In every civil association there is the carefully regulated domain of uniformity, and the region of personal liberty behind, beyond and before it. The matter on which the law is exercised varies according to the nature and end of the association; in some the common life touches more closely on the personal domain than in others. But through all life there runs this distinction between the territory that is common to all and that which is private and individual—the former subject to the law of obedience, the latter free and personal. Any unlawful excess of authority consists in overstepping this boundary and forcing the law of uniformity into the realm of personal liberty. But what would be an excess on the part of one kind of authority might not be so as practised by another; what would be tyranny to the civilian might be discipline to the soldier. However close the pressure of outer force and authority, personal freedom remains always, in its nature, remote and inaccessible, and even the slave can find a way of liberty in the teaching of St Paul. But none the less can this rightful freedom be contracted and maimed, in so far as that which should be private and individual and unique is made public and common and uniform. And it may be noted, in passing, that the too frequent tendency of a democracy to tamper with the personal domain is one more

proof of the fact that freedom is not so universally appreciated and desired as is commonly thought.

Now religious obedience goes further than any kind of civil subjection, and might appear as though it did actually seize on that individuality which all the other authorities had left more or less intact. Its end being chiefly spiritual and not temporal, its area is not so clearly defined as that of worldly authorities. None the less must it always bear in it the same distinction between the public and the private, the general and the individual elements of life and conduct. It goes further, it asks more, in the sacrifice of the particular to the general good; it is directed, not to some external specified end, but to the very eradication of self-will as an end in itself; but none the less must it still, if rightly exercised, recognize the sacredness of this essential boundary.

Hence nothing could be more harmful to a true conception of obedience than the view frequently put forward in spiritual text-books, according to which the obedience of the old is to be the same as the obedience of the young, and the whole man is to grow daily more precise in the observance of outer details. Is the maturity of spiritual life to possess exactly the same characteristics as its childhood? And is the man of advanced religious experience to be found still patiently working at his spiritual pothooks and hangers? Not that it would much signify if external details became so habitual that he fulfilled them more exactly without any conscious effort; but our writers mean more than this, and give it to be understood that it is a sub-

ject for admiration when the whole personality becomes daily more concentrated in the literal fulfilment of the law. This is surely to mistake the means for the end. If the object of obedience be to conquer the tyranny of self-will the result should surely be, after a certain amount of effort, some freedom from this same tyranny, with consequent emancipation from continued attention to the same difficulty.

The end of grammar is to teach us the right way of speech, and enable us, without conscious reference to rule, to clothe our thoughts in fitting language. And, analogously, the right end of religious obedience is to teach us the true method of self-direction; to lead us, by the path of discipline, to that possession of self which will enable us to dispense with the props which were, in the first instance, necessary.

The man who has really achieved a certain self-mastery will easily conform to the laws established for the region of common rights and duties; his wishes and inclinations will not infringe on those of others; he will be ready for the harder task if it should come in his way, but his mind and heart will be absorbed by something more spiritual than what constitutes the ordinary matter of obedience. He will be what ascetics call "indifferent" as to those outside concerns, having brought himself to a state in which they regard him too little to be the object of renunciation any more than desire.

But beyond the conquest of self-will, obedience has for its final aim, as spiritual writers teach us, the conforming of our will with that of God. In every field of thought and effort this motive has its counterpart, so far as some kind of subjection

is necessary in order to the appropriation of what is greater than ourselves. Obedience, in its three degrees of action, will and judgement, is not peculiar to asceticism.

"Under this yoke," says a German philosopher, speaking of the life of thought rather than action, "must we pass, for there is no other road to that land of spiritual freedom in which our individuality can thrive and grow. Many look on this region from afar, and dream that they can win to it without passing under the yoke; but it cannot be." *

He goes on to tell us that there are some who, having passed under the yoke, go no further, and never attain to the liberty which lies beyond.

"Now there are, not seldom, men who truly accomplish the needful self-conquest, but then think it their duty, for the sake of that same self-conquest, to renounce for ever all spiritual individuality."

Here we have an example of those to whom we have referred. They have submitted themselves to the yoke of authority in their desire to eradicate self-will, but they have forgotten the ultimate object, which is the widening of their personal existence by the realization of a larger, fuller life in God. They have run the race, but have stopped short of the goal; they have paid the price but not taken home the prize.

But in this matter we are met by a very real difficulty. There are souls which never free themselves from the life of routine and uniformity; they are both in it and of it, not merely in it without being of it. For such as these the law of obedience remains the same

* Class, "Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie," etc.

from first to last, and to invite them to a larger share of liberty would be to open the way to selfishness and tyranny. Their life is not strictly private in any sense, but is almost entirely taken up and concentrated in those things which are common to each one of us and to all. Some residue of the individual and unique there must be in every one of us, and perhaps far more than we suspect even in those who have it least. But, to whatever extent it may exist, its existence is subconscious and cannot be much considered in the guidance of their lives. Hence, for them, obedience must remain as literal and absolute a law in the end as in the beginning, for the simple reason that their lives are wholly spent on those matters in which uniformity is the prevailing law. Others are not called on to obey less strictly in the same order of things, but the chief and better part of their lives transcends this region of outer law, hence the passing through the yoke is rather a stage of their spiritual existence than a permanent condition.

"Live and do as you like": this is the law of the liberty of the children of God. We are as travellers, wending our way painfully from the land of natural impulse and self-will to the land of light and liberty, whose very atmosphere is freedom. Between the starting point and the goal lies that domain of subjection and obedience, which is a necessary phase of the journey. As false is it to assume that this essential law of our progress can be neglected as to maintain that, in the law itself, we find our life. The bread of the soul, which is freedom, can only be earned in the sweat of the brow. We must suffer the torments of inward revolt when we

first submit our necks to the yoke, as we must endure that sense of loneliness which supervenes when we pass from under it into a land where we miss the milestones and boundaries to which we were used.

We are sometimes told that those who live under the yoke of obedience have this consolation, that they are always sure of doing the will of God in every emergency, and it is tacitly implied that others cannot enjoy the same certainty. But what do these words really mean? Is it not conscience that decides when we are to obey, just as she decides in other cases what line we are to take on our own initiative? If those not under obedience can never be sure of doing the will of God, even when they follow the dictates of conscience, neither can those who obey be sure they are right in obeying. Even from an objective point of view the commands of superiors are not infallibly right, and the only additional security that obedience gives is by limiting the choice of ways and, above all, providing a powerful safeguard against the illusions of self-love. This last is no mean advantage, but it must not be unduly stretched to the detriment of things true and sacred.

All authority that is wise and God-like will bear continually in mind that every soul is the throne of its Maker, a throne from which judgement is pronounced in each individual case. Holy as may be the call of obedience, and sacred as is the duty to fulfil standing obligations, this call must still be echoed in the conscience itself to attain its final ratification.

We look for the recognition of this principle in the exercise of monastic authority

above all, since obedience is, in this case, imposed still more for the individual than for the general good. The monk is not for the monastery, but the monastery for the monk—a truth which is sometimes in danger of being forgotten. Parents in religion and parents in the flesh must guard against the same error: they must teach their young to fly, but they cannot always expect to accompany them in their flight.

And thus nothing can entirely free us from that loneliness which is our lot upon earth, and still less can anything dispense us from bearing our individual burden and saving our own soul. In our first undergoing of the yoke of submission we have to suffer from what is worst in us, from the uprising of passion and egoism, and the struggle of angry self-will. In our last stage of spiritual freedom we suffer, on the contrary, from what is best in us, nor can we have that plain assurance which we enjoyed in our former condition, wherein we could easily compare the state of our soul with that of others. But now our experience, being strictly personal, is to a great extent incommunicable; we must leap in the dark, we know not where; we must "lose our soul," trusting only in God for the finding of it again. But provided we look always forward, and not back, that we set the face of our intention steadily towards the promised land, many falls and blunders will not avail to check our course, and we shall find ourselves again, not severed from our past, as for a moment seemed our lot, but possessing all that we have won by it in a new and more complete synthesis.

XII

Deus Meus et Omnia

"He for God only, she for God through him"

FROM the day when the Gospel word went forth that a man should leave father, mother and wife for the service of his Maker, that he should hate those of his own household and despise his own flesh and blood for the sake of Christ, the whole question of human love has occupied the attention of our spiritual teachers; and the heart, in its struggle for detachment, has been subjected to a discipline no less painful and heroic than the mind in its efforts after faith. The highest point of ascetic endeavour has been reached in the doctrine of religious life, and from this idea of complete renunciation have flowed a number of subsidiary doctrines, carrying the same principle, in a mitigated form, into circumstances less rigorous.

Even as summed up in the practice of perfect chastity this doctrine is not peculiar to the Catholic Church alone. By some mysterious instinct it has found a hearing in individual souls of every time and place, and we have to account for its spontaneous appearance in minds that have gleaned it from no outside influence, as well as for its systematized representation in theology and ascetical teaching. But, like all other spiritual doctrines, it has suffered from

formality, reiteration and exaggeration, so that sometimes the reality seems hardly discoverable under the mass of false accretions which have gathered around it. And thus some Christian apologists have almost abandoned the task of justifying the principle in itself and on its own merits, and have simply attempted to show its advantages from a utilitarian point of view, in so far as a vow of chastity frees a man from family cares and secures him fuller liberty to devote himself to the interests of God and religion. In such a case celibacy becomes valuable, not for its own sake, but from a negative point of view; a man has more time and attention for the interests of the Church in so far as he withdraws himself from private occupations.

It is true that we may find herein one great motive for the renunciation of family ties, and that in many cases such may be the sole reason for the state of life adopted. But, on the other hand, we see that the married state is often compatible with the most intense pursuit of an end spiritual or other, and no more impedes devotion to the Church than devotion to any other profession. And again, even granting all the advantages of celibacy in this respect, we shall fail to find, in such a merely negative and external motive, a sufficient incentive to the most intimate sacrifice that a man can make. For we must remember that men can only renounce what they actually or potentially possess, and that the true motive for renunciation cannot be found without a fairly sufficient knowledge of the good which is sacrificed. He who abjures domestic life for the sake of greater liberty and leisure renounces it, not for its own sake, but for certain incidental

advantages. But there are others who, even if it secured them no further opportunities of good, still hear and understand the mysterious call, and are at least dimly conscious that the sacrifice is demanded for its own sake, and not for any accessory purpose.

If indeed all true asceticism consists in dying to that which is lower in order that we may live to that which is higher, then must this higher life in some way comprehend the lower one, which has been forsaken. If it is the heart that dies, it must be in order that the heart may live, and may live with a love which contains all the noblest elements of that which has been sacrificed. It is here that the principle of compensation enters, and compensation must not be confounded with substitution. It is not enough that we receive another kind of good in the place of the one we have sacrificed; what asceticism really promises is the bestowal of a higher good in the same order, a good that shall comprehend, even while it transcends, all that is best and highest in that which we have sacrificed.

Nor should we forget that in this whole matter we are dealing with fallen and not with faultless nature, and that asceticism, whether of body or of soul, is proper to the earth as it is, and not to the garden of paradise. A certain higher type of paganism is only false in so far as it takes the world, not as it is, but as it might have been. Shame, however holy, is a consequence of sin or of the possibility of sin; the perfection of nature is when the body is not the enemy but the companion of the soul, both enjoying their respective rights without clash or discord; nay, the perfect activity of the body being the complement and

expression of the still higher activity of the soul. That the best things of nature have become not a help but a hindrance is the fault not of nature but of sin; that human love should in any manner conflict with divine is not because we can love too well or too much, but because the lover and the beloved both share the imperfections of a nature which is corrupt and vitiated, and can, therefore, be neither perfect objects nor perfect subjects of love.

And we shall understand all this better by a simple recognition of the fact that, in the language of the saints, conjugal love is at once the chosen emblem of the union between the soul and God, and the peculiar matter of renunciation in order to the same end, as if those who renounced the human reality could attain the highest realization of its divine figure. To the mystics it has been the constantly recurring symbol, and, not even contented with the more spiritual side of this human relationship, they have drawn similes likewise from its carnal aspect.

It is but a symbol, just like all other earthly types applied to things divine, and a symbol it must remain; but who shall say, until the veil of time and space is withdrawn from before our eyes, how much of heavenly reality may be contained in what we have regarded as earthly symbols? And thus, when the saints return continually with loving preference to the analogy of conjugal love, we may at least surmise that there is in it some element which corresponds in a special manner with the love they are endeavouring to describe.

We call God our Father, and so He is. This relationship depicts our dependence, a depend-

ence which is rescued from humiliation by the bond of paternal love. But a father has many children, and though he need not love one the less because he loves another also, though his affection, like a flame, can kindle many others without growing dim thereby, still it is none the less a love of its nature not exclusive, but general; it is a love which can go to one, or a few, or many: numbers are indifferent. Furthermore, it is a love of protection rather than companionship, of giving rather than getting or demanding to get. True it is we see father and son develop, in later years, a kind of brotherly friendship, but this is when the parental and filial relationship has been, in a sense, outgrown; they become brothers in so far as they cease to be father and son.

God has also, in His infinite tenderness, deigned to call Himself our mother—"Though a mother should forget her offspring, yet will I not forget thee." This analogy is like to the other save as suggesting less authority, more pity and gentleness, less restraint, more care and sympathy. But again, it is a love that is even more prolific; the heart of a mother seems inexhaustible in its capacity for loving many as one; where a father will be led by character and temperament to certain preferences, a mother's love will pour itself forth over the worthy and the unworthy with an almost indiscriminating profusion. And it has in it also, perhaps, even less of the element of companionship, from the fact that it asks less in reward. A father ordinarily claims deference, gratitude and love; a mother asks nothing at all, but lives wholly in her own tenderness.

We have been taught again to look upon our God as a brother. But this simile is obviously limited as to its fitness. It applies more directly to the sacred Humanity than to the Divinity, and represents mainly that aspect of God's dealings with the human family by which He shared our sorrows and imparted to us His glory.

Lastly, He is the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." And here we touch on that love which, next to the one of which we speak, can best lend itself to symbolize the love between God and the soul. In it we have the sympathy and companionship, the mutual sharing of one another's goods, and the deliberate choice on either side, for, as it has been said, *Les amis sont les parents choisis par le cœur*. But if true friendship has in it a large share of those elements which go to make up conjugal love, it has little which the other does not possess; in what it has it is, at best, not more than equal, and in many respects it falls short. It cannot, of its very nature, ask so much, nor give it; it is less absorbing, less exclusive, less complete. We turn then once more to the love of husband and wife to see wherein consists its special fitness as type of the love between God and the soul.

And first, it is a love which consists in mutually sharing the goods that each one possesses. The treasures on the one side may exceed those on the other, the husband may have greater riches, whether intrinsic or personal, or it may be the wife that is more generously endowed. Be this as it may, whatever each one has, that he or she must impart, and it were strange indeed if each had not some advantage, however small, that the other did not possess, and which became

consequently a gift from the lover to the beloved. And even were it possible that, theoretically considered, every excellence superabounded on the one side, we have to remember that quantity is but an aspect of reality, and that the man of five feet six inches in height possesses his own bulk and stature just as much as the giant of seven feet. Thus the intellect and moral worth that are less in one man than in another, according to our standard of comparison, are none the less real and personal, and the one who gives less still gives something. And again, in a certain sense, receiving is giving; it is the opening out of a passive element in which the active can achieve its own perfection; and thus the lover comes to fuller and richer life in the beloved, his mere admission into another field is his gain.

Between God and the soul there is, as we know, nothing less than an infinite disproportion of endowments; He has all, and the soul herself has nothing but what He has given her. But amongst His gifts there is one that serves to restore a certain balance, and that is the gift of individuality or personality. This it is by reason of which the humblest of creatures, even in comparison with its Creator, may be said to have something of its own. I am not less alive because many others are alive also, and have been alive much longer. I do not know less because numbers of others know a great deal more and a great deal better. And thus, however much the quality of creaturehood may pervade all that we are or can do, we may still say that we are none the less ourselves, that is single, unique personalities, because without God we are nothing; and

in proportion as we have being we have all else that is the unfolding of being, knowledge, love and the rest. We are not less than God in the sense that because He is all we are nothing, because He is mighty we are useless. The difference is not a numerical proportion of more or less, but, with the gulf of infinity between us, we are still living, and real, and personal. Thus it is that we can give God something which is not in itself less because He is more, and which is truly a gift because He cannot get it unless we give it. And in so far as this gift is not merely something that belongs to us, but our very living self, we open out to Him a domain in which He can actuate His own life and love.

Secondly, conjugal love is, of its very nature, exclusive, and this exclusiveness is based not merely on our limitations as to the quantity of affection of which we can dispose, but on a peculiar quality of the love itself. Other affections can be multiplied as to their object without being thereby lessened as to their amount. It is probable that parents do not really love an only child more than they love each one of a family of ten. Their love, in the first case, may be more absorbing, and their grief more acute in case of separation; but this is because they have but one outlet for their parental affection, and not because the quantity is actually greater in one case than in another. Grief and absorption are consequences of love, but are not love itself. Again, certain kinds of friendship can be bestowed on several, and yet one not in any way diminish the other; some love more, some love less; some spread their affections over a wider, others over a narrower area; but the difference seems to

have its root rather in the source whence the affection springs than in the method of its distribution. Those who personally love the larger number of friends are not, perhaps, those who possess a greater capacity of loving, but those who possess a wider and more varied sympathy, while the man of fewer ideas has also fewer outlets for his affections.

But conjugal love is exclusive in such a sense that it is from one to one, and as much wounded by the intrusion of a third as by a still wider distribution. The perfection of this relationship would be less injured by the permission to change than by its extension to more than one at the same time. In the former case, variation of temperament might, in the process of time, dissolve the affections and sympathy of the union, and make it easier to transfer them to another who answered better to the personal condition; though God has, in fact, placed us under a higher law, which is to raise us above the changes of mind and character, and secure endurance and constancy even at the cost of intensity. But union with more than one is opposed to the best instincts of our nature, and this because its peculiar quality consists not in the giving of love, but in the giving of self, and in a certain absolute identity of ends and interests. To his other friends a man gives love, sympathy and good services—to a spouse he gives himself; in the former case something goes out from him to them, in the latter there is nothing to go out, for the giver is the gift. Others may possess better and higher endowments, but the beloved is the beloved, not necessarily on account of his or her excellences, but

because each lives in the other. As friends we could still love the friend that was acting contrary to all we held right and advisable; we could see him to be wrong, and yet wait like a mother, and long for his return—not going with him, but endeavouring to bring him back to ourselves. But in the conjugal union the lover would desire to follow the loved one into hell itself rather than suffer separation—"thy people shall be my people, thy God my God."

Watts's wonderful picture of Paolo and Francesca in the "Inferno" is a fine representation of such love, unutterable anguish yet indivisible union, participated sadness preferred to separate joy, an embrace that is bitter and hopeless, and yet that all the powers of hell cannot sunder. Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel" is the same conception from an opposite point of view—hell is not hell when they are together, heaven is not heaven when they are apart.

Now it is when we conceive love in such sort that we understand, first, why it may not and must not attain its full perfection in sinful nature, and secondly wherein consists its peculiar analogy to the love that can exist between God and the soul. Our human affections are, alas! often so feeble and self-centred that they afford only too little possibility of real menace to that which is divine. Such love as that of which we have spoken exists but rarely, and then perhaps for a short time only. Conjugal love is often swamped in the parental affections, or worn out by adverse circumstances. But this is not the fault of the love in itself but of the weakness of the human hearts in which it is rooted. And it is when we turn to the types of conjugal love which

are strongest, even though misdirected, that we find what the saints had in mind when they first renounced it in its earthly form, and then contrasted its joys with those of the divine union. For any two bound together absolutely, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, would have to share each other's spiritual as well as temporal wealth or destitution. Hence there must be limitations in the very nature of the tie when those bound by it are fallen and fallible. We cannot entirely give ourselves to God and to a creature who will not in everything seek God; and no creature on earth seeks Him wholly and entirely. In Eden such a donation would have been right and possible, for the desires of the creature would never have trespassed on the rights of the Creator; but, as we are now, a certain weakening of the conjugal bond is necessitated by our essential obligation to serve God even at the cost of what we hold dearest. It is not, in fact, the love of God that competes with the love of man, but we cannot give ourselves all to Him and all to a creature who may not constantly seek and serve Him. Not only must the lovers part and go different ways when conscience imposes it, but even remotely their union and mutual obligation contain always an "if," a proviso "except in case of sin," or "unless God order it otherwise." And the completeness of conjugal union is marred, not only by physical separation, but by any sundering of temporal or eternal ends and interests. As, in an ideal world, God would be best found and served by taking all things and not by leaving them, so could also the union between husband and wife have been carried to its utmost per-

fection and completeness. There need have been no fear, on the one side of giving, on the other of receiving, too much; for in a nature wholly turned to God neither could the gift be misdirected, nor could it be misapplied. But, as we are, it has often proved otherwise, and it has been by at least a weakening of the human element that the divine has attained a fuller strength and completeness. The exclusiveness of the rights of God has become the ground for denying the exclusiveness of any rights of man, and our Maker has been represented as jealous because the creature is capable of theft. And it is just those capable of this human affection in its intensest form who may also find themselves called to the highest and hardest renunciation, and who may have to experience the piercing truth of those words: *Si Jesus non fuerit tibi amicus præ omnibus amicis, eris nimis tristis et desolatus.*

But as Christ promised His disciples that they who left all things for Him should, besides entering into life everlasting, receive an hundredfold in this world also, so we see that nature may, and often does, enter again into what she has renounced, and receives compensation on earth as well as in heaven. For what, after all, is the aim of the spiritual life, but to make the ante-chamber as like as may be to the presence room? And we have another proof of the mysterious meeting of extremes in the fact that saint and sinner seem both to approach nearer to the ideal of conjugal love, even in the human order, though starting from such opposite points and tending to such opposite goals. The sinner disregards God, and deliberately prefers hell with

the beloved to heaven without; the saint, on the contrary, so identifies himself with God that his love for the beloved becomes, as it were, identified with the love of God Himself for each individual soul, and the tie is so indissoluble that he would snatch the loved one from the very jaws of destruction; he cannot go to hell, so the other must perforce come to heaven.

"To God," says Mother Julian of Norwich, "all the world is as one man, and one man as all the world." We are all organs of the mystical body of Christ, and not only organs, but each one a vital organ. Like the soul in the body, so is the love of God in all humanity: whole in the whole, and whole in each part. And thus God can be the spouse of each individual soul, and yet, at the same time, of all together. He wants all, and He equally wants each one; the world is all in all to Him as though it were but one object, and yet each single soul is as much as all the world.

To His creatures it is of this second power that He has imparted the larger share; to us, though in a lower sense, one man may be as all the world, but not all the world as one man. It is in the conjugal union chiefly that this one-to-one and all-in-all affection is exemplified, and we find a certain dim, inadequate shadow of the special and unique love of God for the individual soul in the very aberrations of strong human affections. Even when wrong in its manner it may still be like in its essence, and thus in every affection of the kind we have some human approach to its divine counterpart.

But in the saints this resemblance has become still closer, and in proportion as they have been

able to return nearer to the ideal of sinless nature have they also been able to love in a manner more divine. Looking out through the eyes of God Himself on a single soul, they have seen that it is worthy of the labour and travail of the entire universe, and that they may most rightly give their all to win this one pearl, which is to them as the kingdom of heaven.

Whether they can thus love one only or several matters little; the one thing certain is that they have regained their right to love without limit, in so far as they have learned to love without sin.

And thus such love puts on the likeness of conjugal love transformed and deified; it is not so much, as in the ordinary parlance, that each one sees God in the other, but rather that God Himself sees through the eyes of each one, and they share a certain measure of His own perception.

But, as of the first giving up, so of the last taking back, it may be said, *non omnibus datum est;* it is not given to all in the same completeness. Every well-ordered affection shares something of its perfection, but in its fulness it may only be reached through much tribulation, and by the road of renunciation. But to the soul that is faithful to God and man "through better and worse, through richer and poorer," it may be given to win, even on earth, to that union in love, both human and divine, which death itself will not dissolve but complete; and in which she can utter with full meaning those words, *Deus meus et omnia*, which, being said, for him who understands there is nothing left but silence.

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